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ONE LIGHT BURNING

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THOU HAST A DEVIL
THE ANSWERING GLORY
THE UNFORGOTTEN PRISONER

ONE LIGHT BURNING

A Story

By

R. C. HUTCHINSON

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To
L. O. J.

You that keep
In a land asleep
One light burning till break of day.

Siegfried Sassoon.

ONE LIGHT BURNING

I

'But in the morning we found them. The rain had stopped before it was light, and the sun came into an almost unclouded sky, so that the whole distant panorama, as far as the hills of Lohistan, came gradually into clear view while Dagh Milash, behind, hardened to ragged immensity. Before us the cliff, which overnight had seemed impregnable, now revealed pathways—a perch, an oblique ledge above it, a crevice further up—which was far from hopeless in the eyes of men who had already surmounted Tel Rak. Our clothes, still wet, hung clammily against our thighs and shoulders, making us shiver when we stirred from our huddling bivouac. We had slept, if at all, in sour dozes, our ears still reaching for the sound of Lewis fire, making a rifle-shot out of a piece of rock falling from the cliff-face a hundred yards away. But we had still a thermos of coffee between us, and a last ration—small enough—of rum for the men. The wind which had raged through the day before, wet and piercing, had dropped to a quiet breeze, to which the sun soon gave a little warmth; and before the faint odour of rotted tamarisk had risen again from the wady we could fancy that we felt the fragrance of a Brecon Spring. We were weak, bemused and listless, but no longer wretched or without hope. As soon as it was light enough to move we roused the

Sikhs, who had slept piled together and who came at once to their wonted alertness; hitched up our loads; crossed the narrow strip of kirt grass and began the climb.

'We reached the summit, dragging guns and equipment from point to point, without loss or injury; and though a halt was offered, the men were ready to go on. We scrambled forward over the bare rock which, still rising, was treacherously pitted and awkward to heavily-loaded men. And in half an hour, or less perhaps, rounding the eastern bluff of Dagh-i-Khuz, we arrived suddenly at Wild's position.

'We came first upon Corporal Wild himself. He was prone upon the very edge of a dizzy precipice, a Lewis propped beside him. From where he lay you could command the pass for half a mile or more to the point at which it turned, with the river below it, north-west; a position to be dreamed of. I knew it was he before I had noted his stripes, remembering Treowen's description. ("A lean man, chicken-necked. No soldier, to look at. Brown like a Gheber.") He did not hear us approaching, and started when we came up to him. Then he sat up, and asked who I was. He remained sitting and did not salute, but stared at me as if trying to gauge my distance from him. His appearance was very ragged and unkempt, and his face showed the marks of privation, but there was no sign of weakness. On the contrary, there was a certain liveliness in his manner, and he spoke clearly and forcibly, in a curious, soft voice. I suggested that he should come with me to a place some twenty yards away, where we should be at greater comfort, but he would not do so, only urging me to stand back a little, lest I should be visible from below. They would be making another attempt, he said, at

any moment. They had tried twice in the night. He told me where the survivors of his party were posted, and asked me to have them relieved at once, explaining in some detail what medical attention each would require. He proceeded to tell me where my guns should be placed. He spoke rather as if he were giving me orders.

'When I had issued my own instructions he repeated his request that special attention be given to some of his men, asking particularly that water should be taken immediately to one who was posted on a shelf some way down the cliff, if he were still alive. I had already attended to this. Wild seemed uncertain that I had understood his directions as to the man's position, and went on to explain the path of approach in more detail. In the middle of his somewhat wordy description he stopped suddenly, and I found that he was fast asleep.

'He did not wake until late on the following day. . . .'

THERE was no moon that night. And a strip of window-pane, uncovered because the curtains would not pull properly together, showed only the reflection of the room. It was the finest room in the hotel,

Sandy said, "I'll not be long, darlin'," and kissed her, on her bare shoulder and on her mouth. He smiled and went away quickly, stepping uncomfortably on the heavy carpet. The door, for all its plaster decorations and oxidized silver plates, would not quite shut; and he called "Hi! Flossie, what's-y'name, come and shut this door, there's a good girl." But with another vicious tug he had shut it himself. Greta, realizing that it was now too late to help in the obvious way by barging against it from her side, turned from staring at the panels and began to undress.

The Boots had forgotten to bring up another scuttle of coal, but the fire which Sandy had ordered would still be comforting for half an hour. A shirt of Sandy's, soiled, lay on the easy chair, which had two carved feet on the hearthrug, with one sock, a week worn, and a pair of brogues. Greta moved the shirt to the mantelpiece and, half-undressed, sat down. The whole room smelt faintly and deliciously of Sandy. She put the brogues well underneath the chair so that he should have to hunt for them. If necessary she would come to the rescue.

Her suitcase, empty, lay open at the foot of the bed. The piece of newspaper which had lined it for months

had become very dirty, and the picture of the Prince of Wales inspecting a canister factory was almost blotted out by a brown stain, the result of an accident with the iodine bottle between Ripoli and Toulouse. She read, where the print was largest, ". . . a return of that spirit of hopefulness, of quiet confidence and earnest determination, which has ever been and will again be the salvation of our island race. It is in no boasting spirit that we may point. . . ." With the itch for print thus provoked she wandered towards the window in search of other reading matter, pausing in her passage to take off one stocking and throw it on the bed. There was a magazine, she remembered, in the top drawer of the chest. The drawer would only open at one end, for even in its best room the Queen's Arms could not provide perfect furniture; but Greta's hand and wrist, oddly small in relation to her other limbs, just went through the opening, and she was able to pull out the magazine. Muttering "*Madrededios*," she tried to shut the drawer again, but it was now immovable. Sandy would have to deal with it. Sandy would lose his temper, wrench off one of the handles, and then bawl for the Boots.

She realized suddenly that the room was horribly untidy, and still holding the magazine she wandered back and forth, gathering clothes and brushes and medicine bottles and heaping them on the settee by the door. There were bits of paper everywhere which she picked up lazily, one by one, and threw under the bed, stopping once to take off the other stocking and once to say her prayers. In the green crêpe-de-chine pyjamas which Sandy had given her—a betrothal present—she postured before the wardrobe mirror, smiling. On her stumpy body they were utterly absurd. But Sandy said she

looked fine in them, and at least they disguised the breadth of her legs. 'If he'd asked me,' she thought again, 'I could at least have told him the size. He must have had Aileen in his mind.' Then, 'Or perhaps he got them for her really. She'd be sweet in them, and' (a shade regretfully) 'it must have been touch and go. If Aileen hadn't annoyed him by going to the Yew Grove with the Murdoch boy. . . .' She knelt by the fire and said her prayers again—seriously this time; before she had been thinking of Sandy. In the huge bed, she pushed her feet down slowly between the clean sheets—Sandy hadn't thought of ordering a hot-bottle, and probably there weren't such things to be had in Shallytoun; then reached for the push-button above her and found to her surprise that the bed-head lamp worked. She would stay awake reading till Sandy came.

But the magazine was now nowhere to be seen. Undecided, she lay still till the bed was fairly warmed and would be pleasant to return to, before wriggling out carefully so as not to loosen the top blankets which were too narrow to allow ample tuck-in. The magazine, *Rockwood's*, was on the settee, beneath the brown knickers; but she must pause, bare-foot and shivering a little as the fire sank, to hunt for Sandy's cigarette box and to make a spill with the Notice to Visitors, before getting back into bed. It was pleasant, then, to lie smoking with one elbow on the pillow, staring at the elaborate hair-tidy with which the window corner was decorated, at the rich, vulgar, gold and purple wall-paper; dropping cigarette ash into Sandy's bedroom slippers. She wished it were not a hotel, but there was no other shadow upon her contentment.

Maurice had bought the *Rockwood* for her at St. Lazare, picking it out eagerly from the *Harpers* and

Saturday Evening Posts; and had talked about it all the way along the platform, shouting in her ear against the hiss of steam from an engine on the suburban track. "A good number. You must read the thing about the Dahoman episode. No, I didn't write it, a man called Leverson, I met him once. It's very well done, he was there, just after. It's real-life stuff." Then, pulling up the carriage window to shut out the pandemonium, holding his cigar and leaning over her, "Of course, if you'd rather have *Women's Worries* I can probably get it for you. No, I suppose the Dahoman thing won't appeal to you, your generation is so damned cynical. You've no use for bravery. I don't suppose you've ever heard of Corporal Wild. We heard at the time, I can tell you. And we got a kick out of that story too, when we read it in the *Telegraph* at Soissons. And there was quite a lot going on at the time." "But Maurice darling," she had protested, "let me read it first, and then I'll tell you." And he had said, "But you won't, probably," and had fallen at once from his preternatural eagerness to his ordinary manner, gazing with sardonic tolerance at the scuffling herd on the platform. "You know, I no longer really like this place. It's being vulgarized like everywhere else. It's chock full of Americans talking bad French and Parisians talking worse. Still, there's decent food to be found." "I wish I were staying with you," she said, "I'm so sick of trains. I'm always in them. Sometimes I feel as if I'd been born in a train." "You were," he answered, "between Syracuse and Buffalo. There was a doctor on the train, fortunately; there always is in these cases." "But Father never told me." "My dear, Frank had simply no memory for details. And he was in Europe at the time. Well, you'll let me know when you're

passing through again. You'll be going back to Spain again soon, won't you? Don't get married or anything. . . ."

And at first the Dahoman episode, like the rest of the fare, had been untasted. A headache came on in the suburbs and lasted to Dieppe. The carriage was full of English youths, who distracted her with their infantile chatter about outwitting Customs Officers. She had the *Versailles*—it was always her luck, and spent most of the crossing being sick, with the aid of a drab and loquacious stewardess who said that she had made the voyage seventy-four times and been ill only eighteen. But next day, on the way to Holyhead with *Rockwood* as her only diversion from the wet scenery, she had read the article Maurice liked and to her surprise found it moving. It flattered her to find a common enjoyment with a man so fastidious—he hated her Spanish water-colours and couldn't conceal it.

'Of course, by *your generation*,' she thought, 'he means the Vetties.'

The image of Corporal Wild had been with her, moving beside the carriage window across fields and hills and telegraph poles, all the way to Anglesey. '*He had been called up at Devarkenda, he said, and drafted to the Buldana Rifles. He had been moved about a good deal; odd jobs, Gallipoli, Assiut; knew a good many languages; didn't mind what he did, liked to be useful if he could. . . . A lean, sun-baked man who looked as if he didn't give a damn for soldiering.*' And the image had been with her still, brightened and rounded in the throbbing vacancy of her thoughts, when she reached Loard's Halt and found Shaw Vettie, in his khaki shirt and Harrow blazer, waiting for her with the Darracq. "I'll have to go through the town," Shaw said, kissing her cheek, "Aileen

wants some stuff to make a chair-cover." And she had thought, jolting over the ruts in Martin's lane, with the hills facing her and the cold air smelling of Saint Ewan's moss, 'Well, now this starts again!' It was then (she remembered) as Shaw skidded the car round the bend by Root's farm, that he had said "It's to be the hell of a dance. This man Captain Brissaut—he's deuced handsome, if I know a looker of my own sex. Aileen's wild about him." "But who is he?" "Brissaut? I don't know. A roving bird, been everywhere, that sort. He's well-off apparently—property in Newfoundland. Blast that bullock of Surridge's! He's here about The Blue Vale estate—you know, where Loose's farm is—he owns that." And at dinner that night, in her blue stockinette dress (her trunk had gone astray at Dublin), she sat next Captain Brissaut, who with the impetus of old Vettie's sherry made himself most agreeable and talked to her wittily of his soldiering in the Transvaal. "Darling, I wish," Aileen had said afterwards, "that I had your great big childish meaningless eyes. They're absurdly effective."

The magazine, which was crumpled now, stained with chocolate and the grime of three railway systems, lay open at the page where the line had been driven through to Kurand and Wild was starting, with a handful of Sudanese, on his amazing expedition. Her eyes read slowly through the top paragraph, her mind inattentive. Without the medium of words and thought, those pages, close printed in an old-fashioned fount, provoked again the image they had first made for her; an image that was hardly less clear, now, than the bored, kindly face of Maurice Taylor; large in her memory, because with the rumble of wheels and smell of smoke it had divided her two familiar lives, Ribuesca where the

narrow shaded street rose straight up beyond Santa Freda into the mounting vines, and the wet, sea-winded hills of Dumbersheen. A dry image; a scorched and grassless country, a masculine, disciplined world; and there, reluctantly in the centre of the picture, a man struggling with sleep. She turned the page over mechanically, but her eyes were closing. The two lives had gone now. She was no longer a divided person, a piece belonging to Señora Maranoz and her wrinkled brother, a piece to the Vetties, a thin, tasteless slice to the Robertson cousins in Cricklewood. She was in the finest bedroom of The Queen's Arms Hotel, Shallytoun, and she belonged altogether to Sandy; whose face, against the wardrobe distorted by her eyelashes, she could not conjure.

The stages of her latest, oddest metamorphosis were less clear and less real than all the shifts that had gone before, back to the flat in Ealing where she had lived with Father. It was not a dream come true. It was the swift, undreamed-of ending of a season's monotony, of a dumb existence in which life had passed overhead and all live things, trees, crowded streets and corporate families, had neither claimed her nor responded to her claiming. She had asked, not in her prayers but in her dim volition, for a friendship closer and more intimate than the maternal kindliness of Señora Maranoz, for friends less familiar and less impersonal than Aileen Vettie and Maurice and the servants at Loard's; perhaps she had seen for an instant a man's rough body, dismissing it with the knowledge of what men wanted in women; but upon a mind so stubborn and practical the girlish vision of male beauty, of strength and authority and brave wooing, had hardly lighted. Sandy, who for Aileen had been the original of her mind's own fairy-

story picture, had come to Greta as a new being, a creature unpictured and of unimagined splendour. Lying very still, she thought she could hear among the vague noises from below his rich laugh, the laugh she had heard from her bedroom at Loard's before ever she had seen him. That laugh, denoting a stranger, had kept her in her room till tea-time. And had she been able she would have retreated when she came upon him suddenly in the hall. But he had made it so easy, leaving his own world at once to enter hers. "Then this is Miss Hereward? You must be tired, with all that sitting in trains. And it's Spain you've come from? Do you speak the language? Well now, I've never learnt another language yet, but for getting a drink for myself. I'd give the world for the accomplishment." They had entered the library side by side. That was all, except for a ride together to a fair at Mullart Ground, until the day of the dance, when the trunk had still not turned up and everyone was too busy with the shooting to pay any attention, and Aileen had wanted the car for Wolf-Cubs, and Aunt Rosamund had said that she could fix her up in something of Aileen's. The trunk had arrived, brought by Pellot the gardener, just in time. And during the supper interval, sitting on the back stairs, she had found herself confessing to Captain Brissaut as she had never confessed to anyone before, "I'm glad that it's not summer really. You see, I can always get out of hunting, because there's never a horse for me, but in the summer you've simply got to go diving off the rocks at Hoy Point. They're about a mile high, and the Vetties are all so athletic, it never occurs to them that anyone is dying of funk." "Your cousins are very charming and very hospitable," he had answered gravely, "but they've got the imagination of toadstools. All

but old Vettie, he's one in a million." "Yes, he's a darling." In his arms again, four dances later, she had thought 'It was queer, my choosing a man who's not frightened of anything to tell about my being frightened.' She was conscious that a feeling, born since the train had drawn out of St. Lazare, of admission to the threshold of a new garden, was growing within her, outflowing to warm her face and body, to make her dance more happily and with more assurance. It was next afternoon, in the stable-yard with the Airedales leaping and barking round them, that Captain Brissaut had said quite suddenly, holding her by the elbow, "You've never had anyone who really wanted you."

Aileen had been very sweet about it, offering to give her all sorts of things that she could spare to make up the sets of six to which old Vettie's cheque could hardly be stretched; Aileen's charity was universal and homogeneous; and the Vetties corporately, despite their manifold preoccupations with the hounds and the village institute, with the farmers and horse-copers and the battery of the Darracq, had set themselves to bustle up such a marriage as the county would talk of till next Emancipation. Shaw himself had corrected all the invitations, on which the Mullart printer had spelt Brissaut with a P and put the wrong date. Only Greta, busy patching old undergarments and asking Sandy if they would do, and Sandy, regarding the preparations with good-humoured but distant tolerance, had taken practically no part in the feverish proceedings. "The parson, he'll know what's necessary to join a couple," he said pleasantly, and left the Vetties' bailiff to attend to the legal formalities. On the last night Sandy was turned out of the house, Aunt Rosamund having remembered a smattering of the conventions taught her forty years

before at a Montreux finishing school. But Greta, clambering down from her bedroom window over the coach-house roof and along the wall of the pigsties, had joined him in the village; and in the early morning they had walked over the west downs to Salter's Cove, along the cliff-path to Gibruff Head; silent, with the sea growling below them, lost in the magic of their companionship, smelling the familiar compound of laver and sheep-dunged turf as if for the first time. They had walked as far as Shobagh, and missed their train, and returned in a hired outside car, muddy to the knees and only just in time to change for the ceremony. But they had hardly been missed. Rosamund was rather cross, but "if you'd not turned up," Shaw said, "we'd have found a spooning couple in the village and married them, and no one any the wiser." Sandy had made a fine speech, magnificent in his tails, about the glory of the Old Country. Shaw had got a little tipsy, the Boy Scouts with erroneous zeal had filled Lady Ribblehart's Daimler with confetti, and someone had asked Greta, on her way downstairs to depart, "Tell me, is that the bride over there in that lemon frock? I'd never have thought that was Frank Hereward's daughter."

Then hotels. The Stuart at Dovekillen, Terry's at Loughminch, where Sandy had a small property to sell, the Countess of Bray at Arlow. Already they were merged into one hotel, one enormous sideboard, one vinegar-cruet, one faint and persistent odour of beer, a procession of untidy chambermaids clattering the slop buckets along one interminable passage. "There's no hurry to settle, darlin'," Sandy said, "we can honey-moon till the money's gone. We'll see the whole country and settle where we'd like to be, then I'll have a pretty cottage run up, with roses and all that. You'd like a

pretty cottage, now?" He had it all planned out, Sandy had, and for the time there was no need to think for herself. The bothers would come soon enough, what Sandy liked for dinner, how to keep a place clean without getting to look dowdy, like the housewives at the doors of Trevor Street in Kilburn. Sandy would help; he was easy-going but immensely capable, immensely sure of himself. He knew and got what he wanted. In the four rows with hotel managers they had had since leaving Loard's, Sandy had won each time. He had what she had not, a place in the world, not only his own world, as at Loughminch, where all the men had said 'Good day, Captain! It's fine to see you again, Captain! You're looking well, Sandy!' but at every crossroad of human intercourse. He carried with him, into bars and drawing-rooms and railway carriages, the aura of his diverse and hardening experience. He bore Greta with him, not as a partner to widen his passage, but on shoulders accustomed to heavier burdens.

Her face in the pillow, she tried again to see him. But her thoughts were slipping into their own paths. When she turned her head and opened one eye she was surprised, for an instant, not to see the Orange Girl in her bedroom at Ribuesca. The magazine lay, still open, on the counterpane. She pushed it, so that it fell to the floor, and turned out the light. She wished Sandy would come. For a few moments she could imagine his body beside her, hard and comforting. But the grey light kindling in her mind shone upon a rocky hillside where, in single file, men were slowly climbing. The face, far off but coming closer, was not Sandy's, though it was lit with Sandy's strength and dearness. It was the face of someone struggling. . . .

The door crashed open, there were loud voices in

the passage, and the room was lighted. She was fully conscious only when the door slammed again. Then, blinking, she saw Sandy bending over his suitcase.

She asked: "What's the matter, Sandy?"

He came across the room with his hands full of ties and collars, and began to tug at the top drawer.

"Are you awake, darlin'?" he said. "You must get up quick and pack your things. There's the father and mother of a row."

"But do you mean——?"

He answered over his shoulder: "Will you hurry, darlin'? We've got to be quick out of here."

She obeyed him, collecting her things and ramming them into the boxes as quickly as she could, dodging to keep out of his way as he strode backwards and forwards from the chest of drawers to his suitcases. He said, between grunts and curses: "I'll have old O'Bastle in gaol for this, there's no word of truth in what he's saying. And getting the constables and all! The whole thing was finished and done with five years back. And the old bastard was in it himself, right up to his spotty neck. Only he'll pay the boys a fiver all round to swear that he was ill in bed with the priest sitting on his stomach. Have you seen my old shoes, darlin'? I'll be evens with O'Bastle before he's had time to. . . ."

They had been in the hotel for a few hours only, but their smaller possessions, nail scissors, razor-strop, suspenders, seemed to have deployed to the farthest corners. Starting without method, they were obliged to scour the whole room, shaking oddments out of the counterpane, scrabbling together in the badly-lit interior of the vast wardrobe. Sandy seemed to be finished first—his two cases were full—and he called, "Here one

minute, darlin', can you just stand on this thing while I lock it." Then, "Have you seen my matches? I had a box of matches—somewhere—d'you think——" She went on with her work, unheeding, and he began to repeat with growing impatience, "Are you ready, darlin'? We can't dawdle, there's every manner of complication. Here, I'll shut that! Are you ready now? Have you got everything?"

She said, "Ready now, Sandy," and then realized, passing the mirror, that she was still in her pyjamas. Someone banged on the door, Sullivan, shouting, "Will you hurry Captain, please! They'll be up here directly."

"Will y' go and put your head in a tar bucket!" Sandy roared.

The door opened a few inches and Sullivan's face appeared, dismal and frightened.

"They're saying they've got a warrant. I told them you were out in the town pleasure-makin', but they won't believe me. They're threatening——"

"Warrant your grandmother! There's not a magistrate this side Limerick, drunk or sober, who'd sign a—and would you mind please taking your mossy face out of here while my wife's dressing. And you can tell O'Bastle from me that there's evidence in Garty Castle enough to hang him in all the gaols of Munster. And that goes for Tim Dughan too. Will y' hurry, there's a darlin'. Why didn't you dress first? Here, what's it you want now, this thing? But where did you put it? Never mind about those, I'm not taking you in broad daylight up the Shomselizzy. Come now, is that all? Lord yes, you look a treat. Sullivan! Where are you? I didn't tell you you could go. Get hold of this! Telephone me for a cab."

In the passage Sullivan was supported by his wife, with half the staff, and a group of interested guests. "But you'll not be going down the front way!" he protested. "They're all in the bar lobby waitin'. They've handcuffs with them and pistols, and a warrant as long as the stair carpet. Now be reasonable, Captain——"

"Will you get out of my way, you old bootlegger! Have you seen whose name's on the warrant? And what's it for, can you tell me please? Is it smuggling? Because if there's anyone in Shallytoun who's got reason —here! where's the light? Let me get to the top of the stairs, will you, and I'll tell O'Bastle what I——"

More doors were opening, and the hum rose. The night porter, with his arm round Flossie's waist, was laying a bay gelding to a pint of Tipperary porter that there'd be trouble before morning. From the length of the half-lighted corridor came reiterated cries—"What's all the row? Will you let folk have a bit of sleep? Who's kickin' up all this din? Chuck the fellow out, he's as drunk as a sailor, give him the boot!" "I tell you I want to see O'Bastle before I go!" Sandy repeated. Standing behind her husband, as if his wasted frame would protect her tremendous person, Mrs. Sullivan was uttering little staccato whimpers and hissing objurgations by turns, her rambling, frightened anger expressed in a broken monologue upon her own chastity and that of all her forbears. Stopping at every yard for a climax in the debate, the whole party travelled gradually along the corridor. Sullivan had lost his head. "Will y' be quiet, Rosie, I can't hear what the Captain's sayin'. Captain I beg you, as an honourable gentleman . . . the name of the place'll be mud . . . all the years I've been here . . . I tell you there'll be throats cut. . . ." The

bald Englishman in a nightshirt had begun shouting, "Now look here, you fellows, let's take this calmly and quietly," but his stentorian voice was drowned by that of the cattle-dealer in the room beyond: "Will y' be quiet, you thunderin' sons of Belial. I'll have the constable to you, I'll have y' locked up, all of you. Stop it! Shut y' up! Mary's truth! Get t' hell an' all, will y', an' go to sleep like Christian men, or I'll slit every throat y've got m'self."

On tiptoe to reach Sandy's ear, Greta whispered, "Let's go down the back way, like Sullivan says. I'm not dressed fit to be seen in the front."

To her surprise he halted at once and swung about. "Will you have the goodness to step aside, please," he barked, scattering the throng with this unexpected movement. "Will you please make way for my wife—or d' you not know a lady when you see one?" The tumult, in the general surprise, sank appreciably. "It'll be just as you like, darlin'," he said for the public ear. "Back stairs or front, there's no difference but the geographical." And, returning swiftly to full cry, the procession retraced its way along the corridor.

The door to the service stairs, narrow and so built as not to open wide, sloughed the main body of the assemblage, as Sandy descended first, his arm round his wife's shoulders, followed by Sullivan with three suit-cases, and two servants with the largest box. But above, the heaviest sleepers had now awakened and emerged from their lairs to assist at the *auto-da-fé*. Late arrived, they recovered their handicap by superlative imprecations, and the pandemonium which followed the retreating party from the top stair was swelled from behind. "Is this a plain hotel or a madhouse?" "Is there trouble or what is it?" "Who's making trouble?"

"Will y' be quiet all of you, and let me explain t' you!" "Who started it?" "It's a damned Ulsterman, I tell y', caught thievin'. There's the troops waitin' in the hall." "Why can't you go to sleep, all of you, why can't you——" "An' that's a lie, I tell you! It's a cheapjack Jew got up to catch the early train that starts to-morrow." "Upon all my sins!" screamed the cattle dealer, "if y' don't stop this murderin' noise, all of you, I'll lay about you with m' shillelagh till you're nothin' but a pack o' howlin' corpses."

Arguing, now together and continuously but without much rancour, the little group passed through the kitchens and sculleries, across the yard, and through the stables into the narrow lane beyond. "There's no cause for all that fuss," Sandy repeated. "Why couldn't they stay in their bedrooms like decent-living folk? I can leave a hotel when I like, I suppose, without the whole world coming forth to gossip? It's you with your scandalmongering, Sullivan, and the black name you've got in the town that—now be careful how you're carrying those cases!" "Will y' please talk quiet, Captain, they'll be hearin' us all the way to Dublin. I don't want anyone to know o' this business, least of all the constabulary." "Will you stop talking like an old grandmother and mind what you're doing with those cases."

At the waterside there was a tub ready, and the Boots, who had run ahead, was busy baling it. Dropping his burdens, Sullivan untied the painter.

"It's likely you'll find O'Brien gone away," he said hoarsely, "I heard say he was for the afternoon tide."

"Will you stop talking," said Sandy, aboard and balancing himself easily on the rolling boat, "and hand

me over that box. Make haste now, my wife's getting cold, standing there. All right, I've got it, now that one. No, put that one in the bows, it'll balance better. . . . Now darlin', come and sit beside me. . . . You, Thomas, if you splash with your oars I'll have you in the river. All right, let go the rope."

Sullivan let the painter fall and immediately grabbed it again, falling on his knees.

"But y' haven't paid me, Captain."

"Paid you? what for? Do you think I pay money to be woken up in the middle of the night and turned out of a bed I've never slept in? Do you think——"

"But I wasn't turnin' y' out, Captain. It was f' your own good I advised you to be on your way. If I——"

"Then if it's my own good that's bothering you, I'll go back this instant and be into bed again. Come darlin', old Sullivan says he was only joking, he——"

"Are y' daft, Captain, or what is it? I wouldn't have y' back in that house, not if the Pope of Rome——"

"Then let go that rope!"

"But your dinner, Captain. Dinner for two, it was, with serviettes and clean tablecloth, half-bottle claret, glass o' port——"

"Now stop talking! All that rigmarole about a piece of underdone mutton and a twist of spinach. Tell me what it is and I'll write you a cheque for it here and now. Twelve and six? Why not make it twelve pound ten and be done with it? Seven-and-six is what I pay for that sort of double dinner. Here, I've my cheque book in my pocket, have you a pen and ink handy? What's that? D'you mean you don't trust me? Here, Thomas, strike a match. Now look at that! If that isn't Maloney's Bank, Dublin, printed

as plain as perjury, then I'm drunker than I ever was in my life before."

When the argument had ended, as even Greta knew it would end, in the passage of two half-crowns, the youth Thomas drove the blade of his oar against the shinty-post, the boat bucketed porpoise-like into the stream, and Sullivan, from the darkness of the bank, despatched it with a current of whimpering anathemas. His voice was joined by that of his mistress, who had come into being out of the deeper shadows. "And I hope the constables do get you, and you too miss, wedded or not as may be. And if either of you dares to put your painted faces into a law-abidin' house again. . . ." "And when they hang you from Dublin castle, they'll find the five shillin's you owe me stuck fast in the middle o' y' dirty black heart. . . ." "And you, young miss, when you've ended this mortal life of walking with your painted face through the halls of sin and shame, you'll be standing outside the gates o' Paradise and wishing you'd taken advice from an old woman that——"

"That's standing close behind you and advising you all over again," Sandy shouted. He stood upon the stern-thwart, and a beam, shot from the headlamp of a motor on the New Town bank, cast a limelight upon his sweeping obeisance. "And for the love I have for you, be careful, Sullivan, you old double-crossing dope-fence, for I've here in my pocket all the letters you ever wrote to your smooth friend at Urville. A merry Christmas to you, Sullivan, and the same to all the pottle-bellied smugglers in Shallytoun!" Upon which he fell back among the bilge and rudder-lines, laughing till the banks echoed and the boat shuddered with his laughter.

There was no moon that night. The trams had stopped running, and except for a rare motor bouncing over the cobbles of Quay Side and turning to swing its searchlight up into New Town, there was neither movement nor light on the south bank. On Old Side a window here and there in the upper stories was still lighted, far back beyond the tenebrous deal-wharfs. The river mist hung at gunwale height, blotting the margins, and the dark mass of Darrell's Leather Works seemed to rise sheer out of the water. From there, each quarter-minute, came the measured noise of hammer on steel. The boat, moved more by the flowing tide than by the light flick of oars on the water, seemed, by a red light hiding and reappearing between the wheat silos, to be travelling swiftly. Down river, the lights of the highest channel-buoys were already in sight. Thomas rowed in silence, and to the couple in the stern his face was hardly visible. Sandy still laughed inside his nose, but he said nothing. His coat was round Greta's shoulders. He had lit his pipe.

The noise of shouting, Mrs. Sullivan's shrill invective against the trumpeting of fretful males, still sounded in Greta's ears; as if a door had been closed against the babel and might presently reopen. She drew closer to Sandy, resting her head against his chest. But for that uproar, re-echoing in the ear of her mind, the affair might have been a dream. She could not remember how it had started. She seemed to be asleep now, though her eyes, half open and fixed, watched the dark shapes and the distant lights passing. She was not in bed; it was too cold for that, and she was persistently conscious of the thwart's sharp edge against her thighs. The pungent smell of his tobacco kept her assured of

Sandy's presence and reality. A man's voice shouted from the south bank, cutting the silence like fork lightning across a black sky. But, unanswered, the shout was not repeated. They were close, now, to the lighters moored five abreast against the south bank. The hull of the nearest, slipping past, seemed to be going on for ever. The port oar nearly touched it. It finished, and another hull leant up towards the moving boat.

Sandy said, quietly: "Get across now. I don't want to get under those lights."

For an instant the starboard oar rested beneath the water, making a thropple of sound. The bow swung, and the boat moved across the river, to where a fleet of timber-freighters, hardly distinguished from each other, bulked high and sinister above a hem of cross-tied dinghies. Farther down, where the buoyed channel started, ships and houses drew back. The boat inclined again, southward. Behind, a row of street lamps, retreating diagonally towards the centre of the Old Side, appeared, swung as the boat crept forward, and vanished. They were closed now in a colony of craft, and they moved gingerly in fear of mooring-lines, stealing from one to the next of the light-pools thrown by the lamps above them. The oars were lifted clear and shipped with a clatter. The bow grated against a dark wall, and a line, appearing out of the darkness, was caught and hitched loosely to the thole-pin. Answering Sandy's call a man shouted, "Yes, *Susannah*. Yes, come half an hour. Oright, I'll find him."

In the glimmer of the hurricane-lamp he carried, a man's face showed above them. Standing, Sandy called:

"'S that you, O'Brien? What? You know, Brissaut! What? I'll tell you. But I can't talk like this, craning

m' neck. Fetch me up and I'll tell you. Be lively, there's a dear, we're perishing."

A ladder flopped from the deck-rail. "Do you mind waiting, darlin', I'll not be a jiffy," Sandy said, and went up. From the deck he called: "Wrap yourself in the coat, darlin'. You Thomas, keep your soul in patience and your hands to yourself. Be a good boy, now!"

Thomas, passive and inscrutable, lit a cigarette. "You, miss?" he offered, but she refused. For a time she watched the glow of his cigarette-end, listening to the scrape of lines, the faint rustle of the water around, the sound of heavy, loose boots on a deck somewhere above. Her hands were numbed with the cold. She heard faintly, perhaps only in imagination, the voice of Sandy arguing. The cigarette finished, and Thomas lit another. She was dozing when Sandy called: "It's as right as rain, darlin'. Can you come up, or shall I come down and help?"

When a moment of agonizing cramp had passed she started to go up. Thomas, steadying the ladder with a foot on the lowest rung, held her waist firmly and pushed against her thighs with his shoulder. He followed her a little way, assisting clumsily but effectively. She was grateful, but too cold and sleepy to care much if she fell. Her hands hardly felt the ropes, but they seemed to grip of themselves, and at length Sandy had her by the armpits and swung her up to the deck. Close by, men were hauling up the baggage, cheerfully allowing the heavy cases to swing and bump against the hull. Greta stood shivering. Sandy called: "You're a useful lad, Thomas," and two half-crowns, glinting a moment in the light, clattered in the bottom of the boat. He led the way along the deck and down into the saloon.

"Let me introduce Mr. O'Brien to you, darlin',"

he said. "O'Brien, this is my wife. For good and all," he added soberly.

O'Brien said: "Very pleased! 'Gratulate. You'll have somethin'? Whisky? Or port now? Samuel —glass o' port for the lady," and turned to Sandy. "Well, that was what I said. I didn't ask him why. I simply let him know and left it at that. When all's said and finished, a man can't say more. So of course, after that, he said nothing. I won't say but what. . . ."

The wine, revolting to her palate, gave her some comfort. Samuel, before leaving the saloon, had flicked a chair in his best style and pushed it against her. It was horsehair-covered, a relief after the boat. She sipped steadily.

The saloon was lit by one yellow bulb, which shone through the tobacco-smoke like the sun of a London November. The reek of spirits, which, overflowing the room, ascended the companion, was mingled here with a cheese-like odour, the odour of old storerooms and city taverns. There was no smell of the sea, of paint, tar, or brine. Two pictures hung above the piano, oil paintings of windjammers; begrimed and fly-blown. The table was partly set for breakfast, but some remains of supper, pickle-jars, half-empty bottles and a plate piled with tobacco-ash, still stood on the dirty white meal-cloth. The screw-bolts of the closed scuttles were rusted to uselessness.

"Come near the stove, darlin'," Sandy said. "Pull your chair up, you must be half-frozen."

"Same at Lorenzo Marques," O'Brien continued, pushing back his cup, "and same at Darwin, for that matter. Hang about, three weeks, ten weeks, half a load and a dozen bloody niggers to the next bay. Wouldn't feed a bloody goldfish."

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Samuel, opening the door, said: "Passengers' bags is stowed. Everything straight." Sandy answered: "All right," but did not move. He was standing close against the stove, jacket hitched up behind, and it was roasting his trousers most pleasantly. He nodded, smiling faintly, hardly aware of what O'Brien was saying. "You don't tell me!" he repeated. "Lord, but I'd never have thought it."

The chair's seat was slippery, and each time Greta slid forward the edge of the cross-strut in the back rubbed painfully against her spine. She blinked repeatedly, forcing her yawns to escape through a little aperture at the corner of her mouth. Her hands had not yet come to life, but the rest of her body felt feverishly hot, and she edged her chair back, praying that the staleness of the air would not make her sick. O'Brien's blotched face, receding, spread into new shapes, puckish and ghoulish by turns. His voice sounded like a distant waterfall, fainter than the angry voices, which seemed to have grown larger in her ears. The face, the face that had grown out of nothing to hover above her in the darkness of the bedroom, showed again: not before her, in the wreathing smoke of O'Brien's cheroot, but from the dull mirror far back behind her eyes, intruding. Cautiously stretching out a foot, she kicked Sandy's ankle, several times, but without effect.

When five bells struck, Sandy yawned, stretched, and shook himself. O'Brien, breaking off in the middle of his monologue, muttered "Well, this won't buy a frock for the wife, nor a pair of boots for the baby," struck the nearest bottle with a table knife and shouted: "Sam! —Where is the devil?" Samuel, appearing presently with a leather greatcoat and a sweater above his night-suit, mumbled "'Commodation's forward," and led the

way. At the cabin-door he said: "No hot water, boiler's not working, nothing working. You'll take porridge, breakfast? No, miss?" and left them.

"Have you any choice of bunks?" Sandy asked sociably, but already she was stretched on the lower. He said "You're tired, poor lass," and pulled off her stockings. The cabin was as stuffy as the saloon, with a chill dampness; vibration had started, and the Odol tumbler clinked ceaselessly in its metal bracket. "Sandy darling," she whispered, "do you mind putting out your pipe? It's—a bit stuffy." He obeyed instantly, cursing himself aloud for his obtuseness. Mastering a wave of nausea, Greta undressed.

Her prayers were said already, she remembered—yes, it was this very night. She rolled into the berth, pulling the thin blankets as far as possible over her shoulders. "Do you mind tucking it in at the bottom?" "Of course, darlin'. I'm sorry . . ."

As he sat on the edge of her berth, untying his shoes, Sandy said: "I'm sorry, darlin'—about that rumpus. It was too bad, lugging you out in the middle of the night. If the fool Sullivan 'd had his wits about him there'd've been no trouble at all."

She answered: "I didn't mind. I didn't like that hotel much, I was glad to leave it." Then, "What was it all about?"

"When a man's once taken an interest in politics," he said seriously, "he'll always have enemies, fellows who take a joke the wrong way and remember it ever after. Damn this hole, there's nowhere you can put things! It's all past history, dead and buried as far as I'm concerned." He jerked his tie loose and pitched it on to a coat-peg. "There was a fellow called Crichton-Brewis up for Parliament. That was a swine,

if ever there was one, and a thumping Radical into the bargain. He looked like having the vote of every moonstruck barber's-boy in the place, with his pretty face and the nice accent they'd given him at one of the English colleges, Oxford or Rugby or some such. D' you remember, darlin', where I put my pyjamas? Was it in your case? Never mind, I can sleep in m' shimmy as I've done before. Well, we had a fine meeting advertised at Loughshoot, the night before the polls, and half the featherwits in Shallytoun came trailing out for it, the rumour being about that the candidates would be having a few blows together on the platform. In Herbert's old granary, it was, a fine size of building. Well, we had them all inside, and then we bolted the doors from outside, with planks nailed across to make sure. As pretty a piece of carpentry as I ever saw accomplished under awkward conditions. And we told 'em they could go straight home to their mammies just as soon as the plumping was over. Well, there wasn't one bottle of beer among the lot of them, and they were mad. It seemed to me better to go right away and . . ."

But, realizing that she was asleep, he kissed her forehead, turned out the light, and clambered cautiously up to his own berth.

¶ It was dark when they came into Pawlmawr Roads on the second evening, and the slag-heaps mounting behind the town were scarcely visible against the black hills beyond. Greta had been lying down all day, dressed. The ordeal of dressing was all she could manage, as the *Susannah* rolled slowly and steeply in the swell. When they reached flat water she helped Sandy to pack and ate an apple he had got for her. O'Brien did not appear to say goodbye.

They were berthed in Lewis's Dock, half-lighted and desolate. Samuel helped carry their things into Moors End Road, where they stood facing the tattered hoardings and watching the trams lurch on to the loopway until, by a lucky chance, an empty cab came. Hailing it, Sandy said "The Trundle will do till we've had a look round. It's decent enough. Trundle, sonny, and don't try any tricks with your register." The road shone from a recent shower, and there was rubbish all along the gutters. The man drove at thirty-five, braking violently when a lorry plunged out from one of the dock gates and correcting his skid with easy nonchalance. Through the rain-spotted window on the off-side Greta saw hoarding, warehouse, tavern, and mission-hall pass in succession so regular that she could fancy them as stage-scenery revolving on a giant cylinder. There were men standing, not in groups but in a line facing the traffic, under every street lamp. At the Five-ways the taxi slewed left into a double-tracked street of cheap furniture and fish shops, where, at the first corner, the Trundle proclaimed itself with a board stretching from facia to roof. Here, men stood two deep on the pavement, and half a dozen sprang for the porterage. Sandy selected unerringly the one with a Limerick accent and swept his wife into the hotel.

Greta stood in the hall while Sandy, in the office at the back, vigorously argued. She heard '. . . the gentleman in twenty-four . . .' '. . . gentleman in twenty-four can find as good a pub somewhere else . . .' '. . . upset the gentleman in twenty-four . . .' '. . . twenty-four can go and hang himself.' Presently Sandy returned.

"The old Jezebel's set out to be awkward," he remarked loudly. "D'you mind waiting while I look

round the better places. Here, you can sit down in here." He swung the door of the lounge and marched in. "No fire! did y' ever see such a place? D'you mind the Commercial, darlin'? There'll be a fire there and I'll not be long."

The four men, who had stopped talking as they entered, resumed in audible undertones as soon as Sandy had gone. Seated in a corner near the door, away from the fire, Greta could see through a break in the net curtains the men standing on the pavement, inert, listless. It was drizzling again, and some of the women passing held umbrellas, the rest hurrying with a shawl or a man's coat over bent heads. Between the periodic racketing of the trams she caught snatches of the talk at the other end of the room. " . . . godforgotten hole . . . enough to break a man's heart . . . nine calls this morning, and seven this afternoon, and one order, one order, gentlemen." ". . . what I call a real go-getter, get an order out of a door-handle, sell a case of canned pork to a Rabbi and come back next day to ask him how he liked it. . . ." The men outside never moved, did not seem to notice the rain. Nearly an hour passed before Sandy came back.

They crossed the street for table-d'hôte dinner in a basement café, garishly cheerful with coloured table-cloths, fierce electric light, and papier-mâché sundaes on the counter. There were three other diners, girls from a drapery shop in Newport Street. A gramophone wheezed sulkily until Sandy furiously ordered it to be stopped. He was nervous and gloomy. He said, swallowing the sweet and lukewarm tomato soup: "I can't abide this place, it gives me the creeps all over. I'd never have come here if O'Brien hadn't lied to me. And Sullivan too. He was positive O'Brien was going

round to Belfast. I'd rather have stayed in Shallytoun—there wasn't one thing they could have proved against me."

But when the beer he had sent out for arrived, he became more cheerful. He asked quite suddenly: "You'd like a trip, wouldn't you now? It'll be a better honeymoon for you than moping about these little tin-pot places. I want you to have a honeymoon you'll remember all your life."

She said anxiously: "But not on a ship? I can't bear any more sea, Sandy, I——"

"But I don't mean a stinkin' little boat like that raft of O'Brien's. It's a decent ship, Polish I grant you, but properly fitted out for passengers. There'll be proper gentry on board. I tell you, I had a rare job to get the berths. All the agents closed up. And then the passport. I lost my passport at Dublin somewhere —you've got yours, haven't you, darlin'?—and I had to search the whole town to find a photographer who'd have my picture ready without waiting. Of all the——"

"But you can't get a passport at this time of night, Sandy. The office wouldn't be——"

"My dear, you can get a passport without troublin' the government in any seaport town at any time o' night if you know the place to go. I've never had any bother on that hurdle. . . ."

So it was settled! She had said, in the woods above Mullart Down, 'I don't mind, Sandy. I don't mind where it is. I only want to be with you, Sandy, I don't care where it is, if you're there, I only want to have your arm round me as you've got it now. I only want to have you close to me, Sandy. . . .' He sat there, bolt upright, untired by the rush of the previous hour as he

had been unshaken by the rolling of the tramp, his strength manifested even in his handling of knife and fork; recovered now from his momentary gloom, debonair and cheerful, a glint of mischief in his eyes; his face needing a shave. Their going-away clothes were in the trunk now, and these were the tweeds he had always worn at Loard's. The trees had gone, and the smell of decayed bracken. "D'you think that's a pretty hat, that blue one? We must get you one like it. No, the girl's nothing, just paint and powder." She felt his hand, stretched beneath the table to rest on her knee. For a moment his eyes strayed again to the hat he admired, but they returned to hers, smiling. The café still rocked a little, very slowly, almost imperceptibly, with the motion of the *Susannah*. "I'm sure I'll like it, Sandy," she said.

Their luggage had gone ahead, by Sandy's orders, and they took the tram. Misted with human exhalation, its windows hid the dreary pavements, and her eyes found nothing beneath the tonic advertisements but tired women and bulging net-work bags. The man by her side talked rapidly in lilting Cymric. Sandy, who had given his seat to a servant-girl, swayed on his strap at the driver's end, still cheerful at having argued sixpence off the dinner bill. It seemed a long way.

The tram put down the greater part of its load at Craigtoll, crossed the swing-bridge, and bounded over the North Flats with the energy of relief, its bell clanging impatiently at the obstructing market-gigs. When lights showed again behind the clouded glass it slowed and presently stopped. The conductor, jerking the trolley-pole off the wire, plunged the car into darkness. They groped their way out hand in hand, laughing.

From the rail of the upper deck she could see over the customs-sheds to the town, a spatter of lights curling round beyond the Flats and ending in a single line of yellow pricks. The tram, already far on its way back, was the only live thing in the intervening desolation.

The luggage had not turned up, and Sandy, after a scene with the purser, after ringing through to the Trundle and rounding on every steward who came in his way, had gone off in a fury to search a wider field. A young man of tremendous stature, curly-headed, stood beside her now, ceaselessly rubbing a halfpenny on the stanchion. He had said 'Good evening' distantly, in an accent she did not recognize. He hummed softly, gazing with detached curiosity upon the activity below, stopping once to ask tersely "Aren't you cold, up here?" "No, I like it." Her feet were cold, but the fresh wind was welcome. It had been stuffy in the tram, and still worse below, waiting while Sandy interviewed the purser. This was not a sharp wind. It came from inland, purified of urban smell in its passage across the flats, infected only with a faint odour of river mud. There was no smell of the sea.

The arc lamps threw light in intersecting circles on the whole length, but forward, where a French collier lay, the quay was deserted. The stevedores, working without visible direction or purpose, had sent up the last load for the forward hold, and the traveller slid quietly aft, arriving almost simultaneously with a trolley-load of heavy cases. A man in a felt hat and mackintosh started to check off the numbers.

No sign of Sandy.

A capstan was juddering, and the tempo of movement on the quay quickened slightly. Another trolley came

out from the sheds, and was thrust through a little group of men and women who, by their attitudes, were still doubtful whether they would sail. From the well-deck a man called again and again, 'Mind your heads there please, mind there!' while the hook of the derrick, moving as if with conscious delicacy, swung clear by half a yard above their hats. Aft, a sailor spat a stream of Slav consonants towards a friend ashore and was answered in Newport English: each seemed to understand the other, and they laughed delightedly. A man carefully dressed in urban clothes twisted his way between officials and porters, stopped a trolley with a firm hand, gently elbowed a stevedore out of his path, sprang up the gangway, whispered in the ear of the sailor who kept casual guard, and passed forward along the saloon deck. A minute later Greta found him standing beside her:

He asked, in a policeman's voice:

"Is your name Brissaut, by any chance?"

Taken by surprise, she did not at once know where she had heard the name, and failed altogether to recognize it as her own. She answered, in a voice that surprised her by its firmness, "No!"

The man in the bowler said, "Ah, pity!" and turned to her companion. "Can you tell me if there's a man called Brissaut aboard? Irishman, tall. D'you know where I can find him?"

"No, why should I?"

"Sorry, thought you might know."

"What d'you want him for?"

"Just a story. It might be rather good. I've got something from a place called Shallytoun—you're sure you can't help me?"

"No, I can't."

"Pity!"

He was about to hurry away, but a new idea seemed to strike him and he turned back.

"You're South African, aren't you?"

"What's that to you?"

"I thought so. Natal?"

"What the——"

"I thought so. Are you with the party?"

"What party?"

"The professor's party?"

"That's nothing to do with you."

"I thought so. Well, naturally I'm interested—everyone's interested. Now look here, I've not much time. Will you come down, and I'll buy you a drink. What'll it be? Sherry? Good sherry on these boats. No? Now look here, just what is this trip? Exploration, scientific work of some sort? I mean, you don't tell me a lot of level-headed chaps, first-class minds, go jaunting about all together on a goddam Polish rowboat just for the sake of the sea-air, or to look at a pretty wench under the romantic Northern Sky? Do you now? Well, we know well enough you're after something that's going to be of service to the world at large, something that's going to be news. Now tell me, and I won't keep you, just what is that something?"

The South African surveyed him with cool amusement.

"If you must know——"

"Yes!"

"If you must know, it's a reading party."

"A reading party. Well now, who'd've thought of that? And you've got a nice lot of books with you, I've no doubt? Those cases down there—oh yes, the professor's name's all over them—they're all chock full of nice books, aren't they, now? *De Bello Gallico,*

De Senectute, that sort of thing? Now look here, I don't belong to the *Western Standard* or any other of the local toilet-sheets. I'm a *Tribune* man, and I've come all the way from Holborn to get this story. Now I'll tell you frankly, I don't believe you've got one book among the whole lot of you. Now see here . . ."

The South African put a hand in each of his bulging coat-pockets and with a smile presented two volumes. De Quincey's *Opium Eater,* and *Jill the Reckless,* both paper-bound by Tauchnitz.

"And now, my little man," he said gently, "will you get to hell off this boat on your two legs, or shall I have you hitched off with the derrick?"

"Now before I go," the reporter said evenly, "there's one thing more I'd like to ask you. You've been awfully sweet and patient with me, and I do appreciate it no end. Just tell me this: why in the name of common sense did you choose to come all the way to this goddam fish-stinking backo'beyond Cambrian seaport, when you'd have saved five days at the very least by going from Hull?"

"To the best of my knowledge and belief," the South African replied with dignity, "this vessel does not call at Hull."

The siren let off a series of petulant snorts, and the reporter became frenzied.

"I *kno-ow—it—doesn't—call—at—Hull.* What th' hell d'you think I came here for? But *o-ther ves-sels,* and *bet-ter* ves-sels, *do* call at Hull. Now look here, old man, this is my last question. Just answer me this one, just for the sake of the dear old mother, you know, sitting way back there all lonesome underneath the swaying kopje: *why not Hu-ull?*"

The siren, disappointed with results, screamed again.

"*Because*," the South African shouted, "*Hull*—is—*too*—*blasted*—near—*Holborn*."

Still no sign of Sandy.

The capstans laboured furiously, but ashore the bustle had diminished and the crowd largely dispersed. A few men were loading the last cases, a few stood by to cast off. The rest were lined with the passengers, facing the ship, waiting for her departure with a certain bored satisfaction. The man in the mackintosh, standing apart, seemed to have lost something. The South African called suddenly:

"Andrew! Are you looking for that box of physics?"

The man below glanced up, showing the lower half of his face in the arc-light, the upper half still shadowed by his hat.

"Yes! Have you seen it?"

His voice, which was very soft, carried with curious ease above the racket. Rather like a parson's voice, Greta thought.

The South African had to cup his hands to make himself heard.

"You fathead! Guller's got it in his cabin."

"Well, and what are you doing up there? Why aren't you helping?"

"I can't do everything. I'm rubbing a coin for shove-halfpenny."

There, at last, was Sandy, luggage and all. He was yelling for porters, shouting to the man at the top of the gangway. "Here, you! and you! Give a hand with these traps! Here, don't let her go yet, I'm travellin'! Where's that other bag? Here, give it to me? Hi! steward! God's teeth! Greta! Are you up there still?"

The man in the mackintosh still stood in the same position, laughing and shaking his fist at his friend aboard. A uniform approached him. ('You going aboard, sir?') He pointed, with a little gesture of command, to a suitcase, apparently forgotten, on the ground a few yards behind him; strolled to the gangway, which was roped for lowering, knocked out his pipe and followed Sandy, at a few yards' distance, to the deck. When Greta next looked shorewards the quay, already oblique to the ship's side, was slowly moving away. Sandy stood beside her, puffing. She wondered, dispassionately, if she would see Pawlmawr again.

¶ The upper berth, which she had chosen this time, was level with the port; and without lifting her head from the pillow she could see the sullen clouds in procession, unchanging as they passed except for the crests, which curled smokily, dragging after the mass beneath. Sandy was still snoring. She could not be sure whether the motion she seemed to feel, an occasional tilting sideways, was real, or in her senses only, a souvenir of the *Susannah*. Bunching forward, she looked deliberately at the horizon, which for a few seconds ran level. It seemed to rise, then, very gently, not very far, and to sink again. She knew it was foolish, but kept her head still and watched intently. The edge of the sea rose again, not violently, but with the steady lift of telegraph wires running past a carriage window; higher this time, with more determination, almost to the top of the porthole-frame; stayed there for an instant, and sank again, right down, lower than it had ever been before. Just once. The next movement was a shallow one, a mere balancing; and the next likewise. But a minute later, while she still watched, the line rose to its former limit. Sandy's

razor, lying on the bracket below the mirror, slid a few inches and came to rest against the peg-top railing.

She lay back and closed her eyes; but now, all too vividly, she could feel the horizon remorselessly springing.

Sandy woke himself with a stertorous whinny, damned something at the edge of his dream, and asked the time.

"I don't know," she said flatly.

"Better get up, I s'pose."

He swung his legs over the board, stood up, on a hat of Greta's, and stretched: revealing, through his half-buttoned jacket, most of his chest and stomach. The stewardess came in with two cups of brown water, a spoonful of condensed milk spiralling obscenely on the surface of each. Sandy said: "In the Lord's name, what d'you call that? All right, put it down. Don't stare at me, go away." She said twice mechanically: "You see chief steward. He answer evting," and at last retired.

"Are you getting up?" he demanded.

"I don't know if I will. I feel—I think I might go queasy. Perhaps I'd better wait till——"

"You'd better get up!" he urged. "It's just emptiness. You'll feel fine when you've got some breakfast in you. Come on now, show a leg!"

"I'll wait till you're gone," she said. "I'll have more room."

Shaving, he talked cheerfully; of his plans—he was going to combine a little business with sightseeing pleasure if he could, and he thought he could; of fellow passengers. ". . . and there's a nice party of boys on the trip with a darling professor to mind them. They're after hunting for butterflies in the mountains, and they've

each got a book as fat as their posteriors: the Odes of Herodotus, they tell me, cramming it up for their college examinations." She answered as best she could, in a faint voice of assumed cheerfulness, praying for him to go. "Now you be a good girl and hurry," he said, lacing his shoes. "They'll be ringing the bell for tiffin in less than five minutes."

It took her those five minutes, when he had gone, to summon enough will-power to get down. The ladder was on the floor and she had to climb. Upright, she felt better than she had hoped. She sponged face and hands with what Sandy had left of the hot water—a pitiful ration for the two of them—and began to dress, balancing carefully in the rolls: she had an idea that you should keep the eyes fixed steadily on some object and allow the body to move with the ship. Twice only, in the course of dressing, she was obliged to lie for a minute on Sandy's berth; where the smell of his pyjama-jacket, thrown on to the pillow, was a whiff of courage. She swallowed repeatedly, feeling that there was something sedative in that action. A glass of water would help, she thought, but the water was stale and tepid. Somehow she had not the strength to do much with her hair; it would do—Sandy wasn't particular. The cabin was stuffy, with the night's sleep of two people, and she would feel steadier when she had walked a little.

Her intention of trying the fresh air on deck was frustrated by the steward's bell, which rang as she passed the top of the stairs. She went down into the dining saloon where, above its natural smell of marine disinfectant, was laid the insidious odour of fish-canner's oil. There were two long tables, littered with smoked fish, chopped sausage, toasted bread rolls, barley crisp-

bread, and hors-d'œuvres in confusing variety: with little flags, alternately British and Polish, for a climax of decoration. Sandy was in vocal spate with the man who had checked cases on the quay, and who now sat opposite, listening with grave attention. The chair on Sandy's left was vacant for her; the next occupied by the South African, who, shaved to a high polish and wearing a blue jersey, was still more plainly copied from the athletes in the Louvre than he had been in his trench-coat. She walked unsteadily to her chair, and the steward brought her thick, black coffee.

"I'm not boasting," Sandy was saying. "It isn't a thing I'd boast of at all. But I think my family can claim to be the oldest in County Kerry. Of course the old place is all sold up now—we're all strewn about in Nova Scotia and I don't know where. Of course the Durries are connexions of mine—on my mother's side. Did you ever meet Thomas Durrie, Professor?—he did his studying at Oxford, I think—or Cambridge maybe. He was a lad. His great-grandfather, who was a brother of the third Earl, married a great-aunt of my mother's. The two families were always intermarryin', and sparrin' between times. It's interesting, isn't it, family history? Oh, have you met my wife? I don't think you have. Would you mind passing the butter?"

The Professor gave her only a brief smile, but her eyes remained fixed on his face. He did not seem to be aware of her gaze, himself looking over Sandy's right shoulder; and his head, which he kept very still, was a good object on which to focus. The port-hole opposite showed nothing but sky; yet it was safer, she felt, to keep her eyes away from there.

"Did you sleep well?" the South African asked her casually.

Unreflectively she was noting the details of the Professor's face. The brown skin which paled at the top of the forehead as if that part had always been protected by a sweat-bandage. The short, grey hair, curling a little in the forelock, contrasting with the dark-brown, thick eyebrows. The eyes, grey, deeply-pitted, which gave now the impression of long-sight, so far and fixedly was their gaze thrown forward. A judge's mouth, narrow-lipped, and a judge's chin; at variance with the eyes, which had smiled with a boy's shyness.

"Yes, quite well," she answered.

The skin, she thought vaguely, had been cut for a smaller face though this was quite a small one. 'This will do,' they might have said, 'pull it tight so as to leave some slack for the hem at the back.' He wore a shallow semi-starched collar, the sides caught at unequal lengths with a cheap pin. His tie, approximately purple, was drawn to a tight knot which, slightly out of position, revealed the front stud. The chin, she thought, was the best thing to keep looking at; it hardly moved, even when he opened his mouth for his fork. The coffee, horrid to taste, had done her good, and there had been no big lurch for a good three minutes. It was safe, perhaps, to try the sliced sausage which the South African was offering her.

A dark-haired youth with horn-rimmed spectacles looked up from the book he was reading and leaned across the table.

"Matt, pass the bread, will you." The South African passed it. "If it keeps like this we'll be all right. Steady as a train so far."

"You don't get sick do you, Keel?" Matt asked.

"Sometimes, when it rolls. I was sick as a cat once, in the Adriatic."

"Well, you'd better be careful. I got the second officer talking before breakfast. He speaks a bit of German. He said we'd get a bit of a tossing round the corner, likely as not."

Keel said: "Oh, a bit won't upset me," and went on reading.

"This stuff," said Matt to Greta, "is quite palatable, though you'd never think it."

"I think I won't, thank you," she answered.

"No? Well, what about this?"

"I think I'll just have—a piece of that toast. Thank you."

Without waiting for butter she bit off a large piece. If it went down it would steady the bubbling cargo below. She was getting to a crucial point now. 'Will-power!' she thought. 'If I think I'm going to be all right I shall be.' Both tables were filling up, and there was no hope left of escaping unnoticed.

"You done much travelling?" Matt asked her.

"No. Well, only between Spain and Ireland. I used to go about a lot when I was very small. With my——"

She broke off abruptly. The last word, she knew, would be just beyond her limit. But Matt, in no way disconcerted, went on munching. His plate was covered with fish and sausage, and both were going in together. He asked:

"What you reading 'bout, Keel?"

"Ulysses."

"What, Joyce?"

"No, the other fellow."

"Which one?"

"Homer."

"Oh, that thing!"

"Well, why not? Maritime, very suitable."

"All right for kids."

Sandy was saying: "Of course book-learning's never been much in my line. I ran away from the Grammar School when I was twelve. But I've got a great respect for it. Oh yes, it makes all the difference to a fellow, gives him somethin' to talk about."

"You know," Matt whispered, "Andrew—that fellow your husband's talking to—he's got a mind like the British Museum. Nothing he can't tell you. He'd give a lecture on the Thinite Dynasty at an hour's notice—and that's not his subject. You'd never think it, would you?—sleepy-looking old bird."

But his words meant nothing to her. She was repeating to herself, 'I'm perfectly all right. I've been through worse than this. It's only that it's a bit stuffy. I'm perfectly all right.' She sipped again at her coffee, the second cup, cooling now.

Her eye caught a cloud through the port hole, which rose out of sight. An empty chair at the other table slid a few inches. The steward, standing behind her, put one foot forward to steady himself as he poured coffee into Matt's cup, and the coffee slopped over. She was done then. The familiar, the hideous, invincible power had risen inside, with scant warning, and had overcome her. Unable to risk a word of excuse, she rose; and the steward, experienced, whipped away her chair. She strode, ashamed to run, as far as the door, colliding with a chair as the saloon heeled gently over; ran zig-zag up the stairs and out to the deck.

Ten minutes passed, as she lay motionless and wretched on Sandy's berth, before Sandy came to her. His pipe was going well.

"My darlin', I'm sorry!" he said. "I didn't know

you were queer. I was busy talking to the Professor —he's most interestin', though he doesn't say much— and I didn't notice you going. D'you feel bad, or is it just a headache? It's awful coffee they gave us. Shall I get the rest of your breakfast sent down here?"

Faintly, "No thank you, Sandy."

"Would you like some fruit—a banana or something?"

"No, thanks."

"Poor old lady."

He bent over her and held her hand. Pulled the rug up to her shoulders. Looked all round him, fiddling, perplexed.

"I'll get the stewardess to you, shall I?"

"No, oh please don't. She's so—stupid. And—she hasn't changed her stockings this year."

"Poor girl!" he repeated, with the pseudo-maternal tenderness of a male midwife. "Poor old thing."

The stewardess, nevertheless, arrived soon after he had gone, with a plateful of oranges. She said:

"Seeck? Ah ah! Anoronge? Naiice! Nein? Ah ah!" Greta said: "Please go away. Va-t'-en! 'raus!" The woman remained, shifting her weight from one foot to the other, smiling with her weak mouth and maternal eyes. Greta turned over, and at last the door closed.

She only wanted to lie still, quite still.

The stewardess returned, rattling paraphernalia, stood over her for a while in silence, addressed her in the peasant speech of Galicia. Greta feigned sleep. Sighing deeply, the woman set about her tasks, made up the upper berth, tidied. When she had gone Greta dozed; to awake, after half an hour, with the cabin rocking and full of tobacco-smoke. Someone was

there again, Sandy asking, "Is there anything I can do, darlin'?" She gazed at him through half-open eyes, as at a being from another world, unable to speak or even think. The compulsion to be sick was growing again; it would have her if she moved, if she opened her eyes any wider.

"Are you sure I can't do anything, darlin'?"

She shook her head, a tiny motion.

"I'll come back soon," he said.

She dozed again.

Awaking, she felt a little better. 'I'd be more comfortable,' she thought, 'undressed in bed.' For a moment the cabin was steady, and the ladder was in position. It was a risk, but worth taking. She reached the upper berth and lay there, as if exhausted after a day's climbing. Presently she kicked off her shoes.

To undress took her half-an-hour, wriggling the clothes off one by one and pitching them to the floor; resting after each effort. But at last she was in bed, warm, happy if no one disturbed her. The motion of the cabin had become gentler, more regular. When Sandy came next she was sound asleep.

When she woke fully the cabin was darkening. She had no idea of the time. Sandy, she thought, had come in not long before, but she could not be certain. She had a picture of him, just the outline of his tall figure and the smoke curling from his pipe, but that picture might belong to the morning. She wanted him now, with nothing but the white girders above her to look at. Perhaps she would get up and dress; but at the first effort to rise she found herself curiously weak. She lay still again, with her eyes open, mournful.

He came at last, when it was quite dark. Again he was smoking.

"You awake now, darlin'?"

"Yes."

He switched on the light.

"Feel better?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Feel like getting up?"

"I don't think so, not just yet. I think I'll wait till to-morrow. I feel rather—tired."

"Just as you like, darlin'."

He paused. He couldn't think of anything else to say.

"Anything I can do?"

"No, only——"

"I'm playin' vinty with the Engineer and a couple of commercials. I'm up five bob already—what d'you think of that?"

"Oh, splendid."

Standing on the ladder he bunched the pillow about her head.

"That better? Well, I said I'd be back to finish the game if you didn't want me. Perhaps I—you're sure there's nothing——?"

"No, you go back and finish."

"Shall I leave the light on?"

"Yes, please."

"Well, goodbye for the present, darlin'."

"Goodbye . . . oh, Sandy."

But he had gone, shutting the door. She heard him whistling, the whistle growing fainter as he swung along the corridor. The oranges were still there, on one of the suitcases, but out of reach. Well, perhaps she was better without them.

A light wind, rising with the fall of darkness, whipped the shallow waves to hardiness, and fortified by that

exercise itself grew stronger. In the smoke-room the men hardly noticed how the beer was tilting in their glasses, but the rain drove harder against the windows, and the boy going forward with soup-pots from the galley had to stretch an arm to steady himself as the slippery deck heaved beneath him. In Cabin 5 one of the oranges had rolled away under the berth, and another followed. The movement was continuous now, varied only at intervals of a minute or more when the hull, seeming to slip on the side of the wet trough, fell over sharply, bounced, tilted back, and violently bounced again. The suitcase itself slid then, and a hat of Sandy's, carelessly thrown on one of the pegs, fell to the floor. Matt said 'Damn!' as the halfpennies slid about the shoveboard. Gilderslee of United Cables drank off his beer. 'Just to be sure!' he said, wiping his moustache. Greta lay passive, yielding to it, letting her body be rolled from side to side, caring little if the berth spilt her into the confusion of clothes on the floor. It came more often now, the awesome thump on the ship's side. From the level position, held for a moment, the cabin turned over slowly, faster; plunged. A bare moment of suspense, when it seemed to be locked permanently in its steep angle. Then the thump, louder each time, then the rock over, right over, quivering. 'It may be like this all the way,' she thought.

She was awake all evening; still staring at the cabin-roof, thinking of nothing, only wanting Sandy. The calm of her mind, like transparent liquid through which light vapours streamed continuously in unhurried and unhindered passage, was ruffled only by a bubble of dim consciousness which, in the lowest depths, broke and formed again. A man's face, not Sandy's; altered now. The stewardess, opening the door to perform

her evening routine, had let in a faint smell of coffee; and, borne upon that slight sensation, a sliver of the recent past came back to rest for an instant in her mind's grasp: the hard edge of the chair, the metallic feel of overstarched cloth beneath her wrist, the mingled voices of Sandy and the man called Matt. The agony of driving illness, just beginning; a nose and chin held apart from the walnut panelling beyond it by her eyes' fixity. A face, seen in a mirror darkly. It was slipping and she would let it go, only that her mind, unasked and uncontrolled, reached after it with a delicate, covetous finger. The clumsy rhythm of the berth rising and falling would not destroy it. The bubble, floating in that lowest depth, rocked gently as everything was rocking. It would remain, like all the sour flavours in her mouth and nostrils, until she slept again.

In the night she woke from shallow and giddy dreams, to hear the sea still thumping. Her mouth was thick and she wanted water. She called gently "Sandy!" and louder, "Sandy!" but he did not hear her. He was asleep with his face in the pillow, the sound of his breathing smothered. Craning over, she looked into a pit of darkness, heard nothing. She was frightened; at first because she thought he had not come to bed; she could remember seeing him undress, but that might have been the night before. Then her fear, tugging imagination in its wake, made her think that he might be there, in the rocking darkness, dead. There was a little lamp somewhere above her berth, but she could not find the switch; and thought, as her fingers groped for it, as her touch found objects unfamiliar to her eyes, that somehow she had been moved to another cabin in another vessel. She sat up, and saw through the misted porthole a black sea tumbling, green-flecked: the rest a sullen greyness,

defined only by the porthole frame. The ship in which she rested had faded away from her sleep-fogged mind, and she seemed to be in a narrow box, coffin-shaped, which bounded helplessly upon a sea without horizon. The roof was close above her head, the ship's wall hard against her bloodless right arm. The cabin sank again, deeper than before, and she lost all certainty. She screamed, "Sandy!"

He woke, mumbling, and turned on the light.

"What do you want?"

"Nothing, only——"

He groped beneath the berth and found a basin.

"There!" he said.

"I didn't want that. I only——"

"Is there anything you do want? No? All right then."

He turned off the light and went to sleep again. She lay awake until the light broke, still frightened by the weakness which held her down, wondering if it had really happened, if she had really seen him.

¶ While Greta lay still through the next long day, in sleep and wakefulness narrowly divided, the *Oenexia* ploughed on her course, rolling and pitching with the confidence of an actor feigning intoxication. To Andrew, balancing on the foredeck, it seemed impossible that there was goal or purpose in the bows' movement, as they swayed above the tumbling sea like the baton of a sleepy *chef-d'orchestre*. Glancing over his shoulder he could see the Latvian boy at the wheel, arms moving one way and then the other, without apparent motive, and a man beside him scanning the horizon through his telescope; but ahead there was no object to grow nearer, nothing, with the sun hidden behind the drab sky, to mark either distance or direction. He knew, rationally,

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that the boy on the bridge had his eyes set to a needle, by which his hands almost involuntarily were moving. But it was hard, standing there and swayed by every varied motion, to believe that the swing of a needle could mark a straight pathway through the desert of leaping water ahead; hard to believe that the horizon, which retreated with the ship's advance, must at last reveal a grey line where the sea was bounded. There was no feel of progress, only of rising and falling.

He left the bollard by which he had been standing and went to the rail, where, looking over, he could see the bow-wave, thrust back, fall over into smoking lather. A man came out from the fo'c's'le, and he called to him, "I say! what are we making?" but his voice was lost in the wind, and the man went on, paying no attention. Probably they were travelling well, in such conditions—he had never learnt the knack of judging a ship's speed. It was slow—it must needs be slow—when measured by his own impatience. This was all time wasted; at sea you could do nothing, save read in your cabin, where smoking was forbidden, or in the smoke-room, where breathing was practically impossible. To read, in any case, was but half a pleasure when cut off from any library of reference. Already, in despair with an Austrian writer on the Wahabi sect who was plainly misquoting von Kremer, he had picked up a novel of Matt's and read halfway through it. And all this time Franz Grundmann, for all he knew, might be dying. It was hard, indeed, to think of Franz dying: he had the air, the spirit of immortality. As he leant against the rail, it was far easier to see Franz alive, there beside him; Franz's chubby face, turned up to his, laughing; the round body, so short that the little Pastor would stand on the lowest rail in order to get the topmost in his

armpits; Franz's eager voice, '. . . and yet you will not make me belief, Andrew my frient, that thoce people are lower in Hiss sight than any of your bishops.' But another background: the receding, yellow coast of Cheduba Island: the distant splendour of Colombo grey-white in the earliest light of an October morning. '. . . God wills us, my frient, but he wills oders also. He hass oder chiltren.'

He thought: 'Keel was right—it was a waste of time coming all this way round. And yet—no stir, no excitement, no reporters; and the passage dirt-cheap.'

He turned to go; it was getting too cold here and he wanted Matt to cheer him up. He ran down the companion and crossed the well-deck with resolution; resisting the wind which would have caught and borne him off by the coat tails; balancing not unskilfully.

The door, as he turned the handle, tugged his arm violently with the force of half a gale upon it. It required some strength to shut it again. Turning then, he collided with the tall Irishman, Brissaut, who had finished his rubber and was going below.

The Irishman said: "I—beg y' pardon. What a gale, and all! Can I get you a drink, professor? I'd like to, the cards are lovin' me to-day."

"No," said Andrew. "No, thank you. Thank you very much."

He liked Brissaut; a type, but a pleasant type; frank to the point of naïveté, outspoken (and how rare, these days!) even in his snobbery. But he could seldom think of anything to say to him.

"Cold, outside," he said, and went on down the corridor. Then he thought of something.

Turning back, "Brissaut! I say, is your wife seedy? I've not seen her since we started."

Brissaut's face became forlorn, but his eyes retained a streak of their habitual humour.

"She is that, poor girl! She was mortal sick just after we started, and now she's lost her nerve, poor darlin'. You know what it is with women. They think they'll be sick, and they are sick, and then they go on thinking. It's dull for her, poor kid, in that wretched wee room all day. But she'd sooner be there, nursing her troubles, than in company."

Andrew said: "I'm sorry. I suppose—nothing I can do?"

"Thanks, professor, but I'm afraid not. It's good of you to offer. But you know what it is with women. They've got better powers for imagining than we have, and it's sometimes a trouble to them. But perhaps you've never been married yourself? No? Now how did you manage to keep away from the girls? It's the brainy fellows they're always after, that's my experience!"

Andrew shrugged his shoulders.

"You must be careful, professor," Brissaut said over his shoulder, laughing. "Let him that thinketh——"

But the *Oenexia,* answering this challenge, reared up upon her aft-quarters so abruptly that he was pitched against the fire extinguishers; and Andrew, unable to cope with that class of esprit, was glad to escape by the same impulsion.

In the smoke-room Matt was occupied, as usual, in playing shove-halfpenny against himself, while Keel, reclining in a corner with his feet on the table, was absorbed in the *Religio Medici.* Guller had joined the mate and two commercials in a round of broad fun interspersed with desultory vingt-et-un, and Paillard, mid-way between two bouts of sea-sickness and rather miserable, was working half-heartedly on a Franco-

Finnish phrase book, with an ancient Baedeker on his lap. Matt, glancing up, called "Hullo, Andrew! Is lunch ready? Or have we had lunch?" Andrew crossed the room and sat down by Paillard.

"You don't want to worry your head with that, Alphonse," he said. "That's what I've brought Matt for. He's a loathsome creature, but he knows how to be rude in at least five languages, which is all the law and the prophets on a trip like this. You know, if I had the great gift of rudeness I should have saved myself many wearisome hours in Chinese posting stations. But then, I should probably have been made Master of my College, which is a bond like unto matrimony. Matt! Bring that board over here and I'll show you how a pro does it."

He was thinking: The luckiest thing that could have happened to Franz was to have been collared in Nishni Novgorod and firmly locked up. If that had happened (and it was still not impossible) the German embassy would have him out in due course, and he would be thrust back into Poland, gently but with finality. Franz would not like it. Accustomed as he was to bonds, he did not glory in them; would not submit patiently to incarceration, like Mrs. Brissaut in her cabin below. . .

. . . . Where Sandy was asking: "Are you no better, darlin'? Are you sure you wouldn't better try and sit up a bit? You could read then—there's a magazine I saw somewhere in one of the boxes. It's a pity, your being cooped up here all the trip. . . Well, I'd better be going up."

¶ Off Drammgen the wind dropped suddenly, and the master, who knew what to expect, went about with hands in his jacket pockets, too gloomy to speak to man

or passenger. Infallibly he was right. Before daylight gave, the mist crept from the coast, at first in separate wisps, teasing. The master came out on the bridge-deck, looked southward with aloof distaste, sniffed, picked a nostril, and went into the chart-house. He knew that smell, would have picked it out in a chemist's shop: Deutschland fog, nothing else. And in ten minutes they were down to half-speed. With daylight vanishing the temperature fell sharply, and the mist, thickening, seemed to cling to the ship, a breath of damp coldness. The *Oenexia* dropped to a timid crawl, her siren booming continuously. And the channel, which before the fog had been almost void of traffic, became alive with nervous bellowings, loud and faint in turns, wholly deceptive. Keel, reading in his cabin, heard the rasp of windlasses and felt their juddering. He guessed, soon, with his sharp sense for motion, that they were hove-to.

He opened his door and called to a steward passing "Have we stopped?" "Yes, sir," the man answered. "The fog. Too dangerous." Keel went on deck, Paley's *Evidences* under his arm, and could feel there the sense of nerves keyed and sharpened which ran like a net of telegraph from ship to ship and came directly to his consciousness from the men above. Ascending, he asked "Here for the night, I suppose?" and received a gruff "Wahrscheinlich!" The loudest of the horns outside their own seemed to be sounding right under the starboard bow. "How near's that one?" he asked. "Who knows?" the sailor said, "half a mile, two miles?" From this deck he could not see the water. It was like Holborn, he thought, that night driving back from Matt's twenty-first, when a policeman had fallen on to the mudguard and apologized for being in their way. He

returned to his cabin, opened the *Evidences* where he had marked the page with a pipe-cleaner, and continued his scrupulous annotation.

In a corner of the smoke-room, where the artificial fog was as dense as the natural fog outside, Andrew was writing on the owners' stationery, slowly and painfully, in the tiny, neat script of one practised in making Greek characters. '*To Mia'an, then, we turn for guidance, and Mia'an fails us. Here was his opportunity to prevent the final collapse of the Durian Metaphysic into a vague, a hollow Berkleian scepticism. Here, had he grasped the significance of his own* Grundlegung, *he might have infused the dry bones of contemporary rationalism* (*for as such we must regard it*) *with the new life of a positive conception of reality* (*albeit a hypothetical conception*) *and a new ethic. In his failure we seem to see what would now be called a* psychological *weakness.*'

Glancing up from his work (which he half-felt was a little unjust in its implications) he saw Brissaut throw the rest of his hand on the table, scoop the cards together, and thrust them, with a wry grimace, towards his partner. "I'm all out of it today," Brissaut said, and pushed back his chair. His wife, who had been knitting by the stove, rose and came towards him, but hesitated half-way. Gilderslee, the fat man whose face always glistened as if he had that moment shaved, held his glass out for the steward, muttered "Same as last!" and asked "You done playing, Patrick?" Brissaut, after a moment's hesitation, said, "Well, Mr. Holland, shall we try once again?" Gilderslee was already dealing. Brissaut's wife, unaware how narrowly her face was watched, returned to her chair and sat down. Five minutes later she picked up her coat and muffler, which were lying over the arm of her chair, and went out.

Guller, leaving at the same time, held the door for her. Andrew called to him "Are you going down? Do you mind getting my coat? Keel knows where it is."

Greta lit her cigarette in the shelter of the corridor and went up to the top deck. There she was alone. The ship lay still as if embedded in sand, but the air was yet in motion, and the fog, like grey draperies dissolving, twisted in spiral eddies beneath the yellow deck-lights, tumbled sideways, and left the space already filled with the same ghostly vapour. Somewhere, a long way off on the starboard beam, a bell was ringing, its clang muffled by fog and distance to a fragile tinkle. Nearer, the sirens lowed ceaselessly. The wall of vapour, rising a yard from the deck-rail, was opaque and formidable, fixed, but in elastic motion like the esoteric substance of delirium; till it swept suddenly forward as if the narrow world was collapsing. The nearest sound, heard only in the instant when the closer sirens stopped, was the footfall of the man on watch, regular and strident. Greta stood still. The fog played about her, sweeping over her face and feeling into her nostrils. Her coat, the smart coat old Vettie had bought for her going-away, was too thin to resist the cold, penetrating air. But her body was warm with the close heat of the smoke-room. The muffler gave her a sense of protection, and the gentle, regular action of drawing at the Gold Flake enhanced the pleasure of her inactivity. She was accustomed to being alone. And here the stillness, the lack of accomplishment, gave her no exasperation. It seemed that the patient acquiescence of a ship at anchor was a stage in progress, a step towards fulfilment, an experience which, as far as it might be prolonged, matured and subtly changed in the maturing; like the valley below Las Dehas, which lay all winter beneath

the snow, marching without song or footstep towards the burgeoning of April. Below, where a bluer smoke writhed and thickened, the steward went to and fro with the glasses endlessly, the cards flipped into the four heaps like a ballet chorus trained to mechanical perfection, her own needles clicked, the men repeated like broken records on a gramophone 'Two spades . . . pass . . . pass . . . pass,' the monotony dragged, not forward, but in an even circle. From the cabin, a modest aperture between roof and bulkheads where snack meals and the darkness had regularly come and gone, the smoke-room was hardly an escape. She was nearer to him, there. But the smoke and voices, Gilderslee's starched face and punctuating sniffs, were a curtain between her and him. Here she could see better his brown eyes and his wide, inviting smile; could listen more easily to the memory of his low, southern voice, relish his smell on the muffler, his own muffler which he had given her. Here, in the booming darkness, her spirit, newly metamorphosed, could suffer easily the slow growth towards a new maturity. Not by reasoning. She feared to reason, now, as she had feared it at the first onset of bewildering happiness. It was a fragile thing that had come to her, as a child to one past bearing; a thing of rare smiles and tender fingers, a lighting of two spirits not intertwined but side by side; flowers growing, each conscious of the other, with separate stems on separate roots; a faith, sweeter for the lingering uncertainty, that in the other spirit, brought nearer by their bodies' union, there flamed the beacon of which her own live passion was the answering reflection. She travelled in a new country, where the subdued tones were unfamiliar and the gay colours unexpected. A lonely traveller. She did not mind the landscape's strangeness; only

feared, in moments when her body was wretched, that at the sun's new rising the high landmarks would shrivel, the colours be blanched to shades of blunt familiarity.

Whether from sudden fright or ungovernable impatience, a ship lying somewhere aft on the port side, not far away, began to rend the air with a succession of agonized bellows. Under cover of that onslaught a man came across the deck from the companion hatch, and she did not hear his steps till he was beside her. He was bareheaded, but his collar was turned up about his chin and she did not recognize him before he spoke.

"You oughtn't to stand still," the professor said. "You'll catch cold—after that fug-trap down below."

"I wasn't going to be up here long," she answered. But she had fallen into line beside him, as if in obedience, and they began to pace together.

"Do you feel all right now?" he asked.

"You mean——?"

"You were seasick, weren't you? You weren't at meals."

"Yes, I was, frightfully."

"Horrible!" he said.

"Have you been, too?" she asked him.

"Not this time."

"But you have been?"

"I used to be, in bad weather."

"But it's been rather rough this time, hasn't it?"

She asked the question rather wistfully. Sandy had not yet admitted that there had been any rolling worth talking of.

"Yes," he said. "Yes, I can tell you that confidently. On Tuesday the chief steward told me that it looked like coming up to a blow. And on Wednesday the Engineer said—if I understood him rightly—that

we were getting a shaking. When you have made an Engineer admit that his vessel is not on a perfectly even keel, then you can enter it in your diary, without the smallest fear of contradiction, that the passage has been definitely rough, and no one has anything to be ashamed of."

"But you survived."

"Yes," he admitted, "but I'm fairly hardened now. I discovered a splendid cure when I was a boy. It does not work with everyone, but it worked with me. I used always to learn a new language when I felt sea-sickness coming on. It's curiously effective. I remember I started to learn Japanese coming across from Fremantle to Colombo. It really was rough, that passage. The Chief Engineer was pure Hebridean, and in my hearing he admitted that on the worst day he'd thought twice about taking a second egg to his breakfast. Well, I was only a boy then, and Japanese was quite new ground to me. I found that when I was really slaving at the ideographs I hardly noticed which way up the ship was."

"And do you still do that when it's rough?" she asked.

"No, I've given it up. I'm so old and lacking in curiosity now that there aren't any proper new languages I really want to learn, only odd dialects. And for those you can't get transportable text-books. As far as I know, Hugo's *Mon-Khmer in Three Months Without a Master* is still to be published. No, nowadays I just watch and pray. Or sometimes I read *Things to Make and Do*. That, I find, is quite soothing in dirty weather. My friend Keel—that rather scholarly-looking young man, you've seen him?—he puts all his faith in Balden's *Guide to Etiquette*. He says it induces scepticism as to the reality of all material substance. But as our friend

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Matt says, rather coarsely I'm afraid, the steward has to wipe it up just the same."

They stood for a moment at the forward rail, looking into the shifty darkness as if they expected to see visions appearing; silent by reason of the *Oenexia's* own siren, which brayed a boastful rallentando to answer a far-off sister in the fold. Then they turned and paced again, he shortening his stride to match her smaller span.

"But I don't know why I'm boring you with such a noisome topic," he said. "You must be cold—hadn't you better go down?"

She did not resent his tone of authority. It was calmly impersonal, the voice of a man addressing his grown-up son or daughter.

"I'd rather be up here," she said. "I'm sick of the sight of my cabin, and the smoke-room's so stuffy, and the hen-saloon is full of Mrs. Holland. This is the only place where you get right away from that filthy disinfectant."

"So you prefer to be frozen?"

"I'm not. I'm quite warm really. Feel my hand."

He felt it, but his own was the warmer.

"Last night," he said, "I was up here till about three, and it wasn't a bit cold. I'd only got a soldier's coat on over my pyjamas and a pair of socks to keep my feet warm. It felt like August."

"But what on earth were you doing up here then?"

"What was I——?"

He seemed startled, as if she had asked for an explanation of the obvious. For the first time he started to speak carefully, feeling for his words. But a fresh outbreak of bellowing from the unseen herd in chorus gave him time to rally, and as the din subsided he answered her without affectation.

"For purely personal reasons," he said, "—no, I don't mean private reasons! Only it sounds rather—self-important. The fact is, I was practising keeping awake. I know it sounds silly, but sleeping is my particular vice. I don't drink very much, I can leave off smoking for months at a time if I want to, I'm not much interested in women as women or in horses except as horses. But I do love my bed. Dreadful, isn't it? I mean it would look so undignified in the *Sunday Express*—'*Scholar's Death from Over-Indulgence. Tragedy of Incurable Bed-Addict.*' Now wouldn't it?"

"I suppose it would. But then it would look rather absurd if they said, '*Professor Dies of Pneumonia. On Deck all Night in Pyjamas, trying to cure Love of Bed.*'"

"Yes," he said gravely, "I wouldn't care for that. Of course I'm not strictly speaking a professor, but that's the kind of error the newspapers invariably make. Tell me, is this your honeymoon?"

"Well, a sort of honeymoon. It's a kind of extension. But do you really practise keeping awake?"

They turned again. The habit of deck-trotting had fallen upon them, and they were no longer conscious of the regular march and turn.

"It's like this," he said. "(You're sure you're not cold? I didn't come up here to bore you with my egoism.) It's like this; I decided when I was quite young to live a selfish life. To do what I wanted to do, instead of getting married and making money and being a useful member of society and so forth. One has to make that decision, thoughtfully or otherwise. I decided on selfishness, and I don't think I was wrong, because when a man's got a turn that way—I mean, when he's a born egoist—it's much better for everyone if he fries his own herring. If he marries he makes

a bad husband and a bad father, and everyone gets his egoism flung all over them—as you're getting it now. On the other hand, I think the selfish life has its obligations. I'd chosen to interest myself in a mass of wholly useless knowledge, and I felt that it was up to me to do it properly. (Be careful you don't walk into that thing, it's covered with tar.) And from the start I found I was always about a year and a half behind my own programme. It's like this. I get an idea one day that I must write a book about the Indian sense of humour. There's something that's really quite interesting, and it's unknown ground to most Europeans. Well, I work it out that a nice-sized volume, a sort of introductory treatise, will take me about seven hundred hours—that's about five hundred for reading and two hundred for writing. Well, that at two hours a day, barring Sundays, is about fourteen months' work, say fifteen months. It looks easy enough. But then of course I've got other things I must do. I have to give lectures from time to time, and occasionally I find eccentric undergraduates who want to learn my subject by means of writing weekly essays, and then I have to spend a certain amount of time listening to the warden's stories. Then I've always got another book on hand, one I've been working on for years and years, and I have to produce articles for obscure English periodicals and even more obscure American ones. On top of all that I like to move about and see things, so that two hours a day regular isn't easy to find. Now you can see what a plague it is, wasting hours and hours in bed. It's not as if I needed it physically. I lead a healthy life, I read out of doors as much as I can, and nearly always sleep out of doors. Naturally the poor wretches who slave to amuse themselves at dancing-clubs want the full eight hours to repair

their wasted tissues, or whatever it is that gets wasted. But that doesn't apply to me. The only thing—well, that's enough about myself."

"But you still haven't told me why you——"

The deck was cut by a beam of smoky light, into which Sandy emerged, calling, "Greta! Are y' there, darlin'?" He came towards them. "Ah, there you are! Who's that with you? Oh, it's you, professor. I couldn't see who it was in the fog. What a night! They tell me we're here till morning, most likely. Well, I suppose the scenery farther on's no better than it is here. Are you not cold, darlin'? And you, professor, is my wife not boring you? It's kind of you to be looking after her. Well, if you're both happy in the fog here, I'll be leaving you. I'm going to try my luck at vinty again, my bridge has all gone to the devil. But you'll send her back if you want to get on with your books, won't you, now?"

'And there,' thought Andrew, as the door banged, 'is a man of some sense, if only moderate sensibility.'

But he was not quite happy. In the beam of light, just before the door closed, he had seen the girl's face quite clearly; and had been more startled by it because, in the darkness and before in the public saloons, she had seemed a matter-of-fact creature, one who moved through her life as a child moves, looking neither back nor forward, asking no questions. He would not, otherwise, have fallen into conversation with her. His rule was to avoid women, because they would pose before him and too often he found himself posing. He disliked unnatural relations, and among women would talk only to the elderly or the very young, people who had no self-consciousness. This girl's appearance was unremarkable by ordinary standards, though he himself

liked it. She would, he thought, be capable of talking for the sake of a subject rather than the idle pleasure of listening to alternate voices. But in that moment, in the yellow light, he had seen a face different from that of the young woman who had looked ill the first day at breakfast, bored this evening in the smoke-room. The girl's lips had moved, as if she were going to call after her husband; while her body, held by a moment's paralysis, had remained quite still. Those were natural movements, for even to him it was a commonplace that a second thought comes always to women. But the eyes! Something more than disappointment, deeper and more climactic, the abrupt emergence of an emotion long since conceived. . . . Perhaps his imagination, his restless curiosity, was raising a phantasm out of trivial phenomena. He had guessed that the girl was lately pregnant. That might account either for her momentary look of fear or for his seeming to see it. It was eerie, even for him, to stand so close to a stranger in this moaning, substantial darkness on a deserted island of which the narrow borders were yet invisible, the guardian spirits known only by footsteps on the shapeless mass above. He would go below, now, if he could do so without rudeness. It was wrong to let this unfamiliar curiosity lead him to . . .

But he was aware, then, that she had broken their silence, asking him:

"Are you sure it's really selfishness—to live like that?"

Taken aback, he did not at once answer. But his mind moved swiftly backward, and reaching the place of her interrogation he said:

"Yes. Yes, I'm afraid it is. Of course men talk of it as self-fulfilment, of responding to a divine urge.

But I believe you could argue the same way about drunkenness. Certainly about opium-smoking. The opium-addict sees visions not vouchsafed to other men, glorious beyond description."

"But they don't create anything."

"Except the visions. Whereas I create books which are read with painful attention, often with acrimony, by half a dozen enlightened Germans who are so mortified by learning that they can be distinguished only with the greatest difficulty from corpses."

He twisted the stem from his pipe, stooped, and blew a stream of nicotine into the scuppers.

"At my age you lose confidence," he said. "When you're young you can see the course of your ambition stretching in front of you like a cinder-track. As St. Paul says, you lay aside every weight and run the race that is set before you. But you don't move as fast as you thought you would. You think you're lazy, and then you feel tired, and then you realize that you haven't quite got the guts you imagined. It's just about then that you wonder whether you or anyone else in the world has gained anything by your efforts. You keep running, automatically, missing half the scenery, never stopping to cultivate your own or anyone else's garden, and feeling all the time that you're losing ground. And eight hours in every twenty-four you're asleep. Not because you want to be, but because you haven't the power to resist it, any more than some men can resist cocaine. Eight hours wasted, neither working nor living. Five hours I will grant to any man, only the really great can do with less. I don't mind taking six, as tribute to Hygieia. Eight is self-indulgence. If you want to achieve anything in this world you must get the better of sleep."

When she left him she was still not sure how far he had been serious. He spoke, for the most part, seriously, with the curious eagerness of a man spinning out in words the close-wrapped thread of a cocoon which has lain for a long time within his mind; rising to urgency when a thought deeply felt came out upon the line, '*not because you want to be, but because you haven't the power to resist it,*' but achieving the stress only by tonal inflexion, his voice even, penetrating the clamour of sirens by its distinctness. He talked neither as lecturer nor as sciolist; not reading her a sermon or an apologia, but holding an object of some curiosity for her interest if she cared to examine it; preserving in his speech a tentative note, an expounder's note of hesitation. He had not been amusing her with jejune theories. Yet she could not believe that a sane man, one whose voice so challenged trite contradiction, could be sincere in so quixotic a conflict. He had been willing to waste his time with her, benefiting only by the fog-laden air. If, in his unremitting struggle, there were some reality. . . .

She had reached the door of her cabin, but remembered then that her bag was still somewhere in the smoke-room. She left it everywhere. It had her passport and a Spanish driving licence, letters from her father, a mirror, a comb and a box of Poudre Tokalon, keys, handkerchief, and a bottle of aspirin; and, apart from the twelve pounds untouched in her Post-office book, her sole monetary possessions—two pound-notes and eight shillings in silver. Seized by anxiety, she hurried off to find it.

Alone now, and standing quite still, Andrew relit his pipe and stared out at the fog. He thought he could detect a light, stationary on the port-bow, where a siren boomed incessantly; but when he rubbed his eyes it

vanished. By himself, he found the fog depressing, and was tempted to go below; but solitude, dearer than the comforts of the cabin he shared with Guller, held him back. His thoughts were troubled with a subtle regret, which an hour's calm might haply smooth away. In part, curiosity; that, he had rightly opposed. But he wondered if his habitual caution had smothered a useful opportunity. It was his practice, by now his instinct, not to venture close to an ailing mind; rather, to sail away by any breeze which the sail of his own thoughts would catch. To act confessor is a priest's work, another man's only when the sufferer demands it. Yes, he had been right to draw away, to watch steadily against a leak of sympathy which might undermine the high, safe dyke of common relationship. But the girl was all alone. If he had rightly guessed her mind to be in crisis, he might have helped her; if only by listening, by letting her talk to him instead of trying to ease her with his own random talking, like a cheerful masseur attacking typhoid fever. The chance had gone. And the thought of her face, as her eyes had followed wistfully after her man's departure, might remain with him the year round, a thin red scar on his memory of this anxious journey. It was always like that. Men he could help sometimes, women never. They were like dumb animals to him, separated by the difference of their nature, making an appeal to which he could never respond. To him it seemed that they were always sufferers, weaker in body and in spirit more tender than himself. All the medusas he had encountered, procureuses at Alexandria, bejewelled and fretful tourists on the Orient steamers, vindictive poetesses from Hampstead and daughter-pushing matrons on the Maidan, had failed to weaken that belief. Cheap scent

and strident voices, silks and jewels in the Rue de la Paix, alike summoned to his consciousness an endless cavalcade of sufferers; women on the strength aboard a troopship, footsore dancing-girls in the bazaars of Tenasserim, suckling women in the streets of Glasgow and the starving city of Edremos; always dependent, always sacrificing, always happy if a man returned one-tenth part of what they gave him. . . . Well, it had passed him by. He had looked and pitied, he had felt how cold her hand was. She had laughed with him—her laughter was soft and easy—and she had gone.

The light he had seen on the port-bow was there again, and as he stared at it the outlines of a ship began to form before his eyes, the mast first, the funnels, then the decks and gradually the whole mass of the hull. It came nearer, bellowing loudly; till he realized that, as he leant against the rail, his head had sunk forward and he was looking down into the *Oenexia's* well, where there was nothing but clouded darkness.

The ancient enemy had taken him unawares and nearly overthrown him. He would stay up here, now, for another hour, another ninety minutes, fighting drowsiness. In the march which lay ahead he would need that mastery which he was slowly regaining. Of late the power he had once attained to, power of will against the force which wrestles with it most irresistibly, had weakened and diminished; he had not troubled to keep it hardy against a new adventure. Sleep was watching him now and knew every point of weakness. There, forward, in vast and empty spaces, it could frustrate and destroy him. It had tried to catch him twice before; it would not neglect another opportunity.

Perhaps it would never happen. Franz might have been content, after all, to make a tourist's excursion and

return to Rosczell. At Kaustborg there might be news which at one stroke would change their journey into a commonplace holiday. He half-believed so. But he could not count on that, and he felt a coldness at the thought of the effort which might be before him, an effort which at some time and place he would have to face deliberately. He stepped back, turned, and walked the whole round of the deck, returning to his former place, where, as he stood with one hand in his trouser pocket, the other gripped the stanchion fiercely.

¶ When Greta had her farewell talk with him he was shyer than he had been before. It was a clear night. They were on the saloon deck, and from one window after another, as they walked, the light fell on his face, making him afraid to look at her except with swift glances. Forward on the port side the coast-lights were showing, and the Noller light flashed red on their beam. Within, there was celebration; heartfelt, because the passengers were weary of the *Oenexia,* her awkward accommodation, her smell, her petulant humours.

The ladies had risen mightily to the occasion, donning a silk jumper or discarding a woollen one. Matt had condescended to put on a collar and tie, while Guller, naturally dressy, had slipped the traces and put on a butterfly. Keel thumped the Japanese piano in the smoke-room, inspiring the officers and a girl or two to sing Scottish student-songs with great good cheer in varied keys and languages. Towards eleven, Mr. Gilderslee began a splendid speech. It was stock for the last night of all his journeys and he had it very fluently. 'The years roll on,' he said, 'we meet here, a group of friends, we part, perhaps never to meet again. As the poet says, *Ships that pass in the night, and salute one another*

in passing. Not one of us can see what the future may bring. Come what may, we must journey onward. Who knows but one day, in some place, perhaps far away, we may meet again. . . .' In the opposite corner of the room Matt had started the gramophone again, with *Pansy O'Meary's Wedding,* but the old man did not mind; he had primed himself for rhetoric, and Sandy was keeping his glass filled. An elderly couple, discovered this evening to be man and wife, danced a rather bovine polka between the card-tables, while the bar steward, decorated by a witty passenger with a woman's hat, went ceaselessly back and forth between the smoke-filled saloon and his pantry. The *Oenexia,* assuming her harbour manners, moved evenly across a sheet of water only rippled by the westerly breeze.

Andrew had done his duty by singing *Come to the Fair* and *Drink to me Only,* his entire repertoire; and before the applause sank had slipped away, leaving his party to carry the social burden. The excitement of landfall had never ceased in him; and his spirit, which throughout the passage had harboured the ghoulish infection of Pawlmawr, seemed now to have freed itself, to have tautened and become alert. Here, on the deck with his back to the saloon, he could watch the lights moving and smell the sea, conscious only sensually of the joy-making that continued unabated behind him. He was half-annoyed, for a moment, when he heard Brissaut's lowered voice—"There, darlin', there's the professor over there, he'll be company for you. Old Gilderslee's running down, I must go back and wet his whistle." But when he heard the door slam he turned round, Brissaut's wife stood with her feet apart, her usual rather ungainly attitude, holding a cigarette three-quarters smoked. She seemed uncertain whether to

join him or to retreat. He called to her—"Do come over here. You can see the Noller light. There! see it flash? Every forty seconds—I've timed it." She looked, but said nothing, and they began walking.

He asked her, at length: "Do you feel a bit frightened?"

Surprised, she answered: "Yes."

He looked sharply at her, as if to be sure that she was serious, but turned his head away instantly. They stopped, and stood looking towards the Noller. He said:

"So do I, rather."

A minute passed before she asked: "You know this place, don't you?"

"Kaustborg? Yes. I have friends there. I haven't been for six—seven years. A nice town, you'll like it. Are you staying there, or making a tour?"

"I don't know."

"Better than Pawlmawr," he added.

When they walked the vibration of the engines was scarcely sensible, and the rustle of broken water was submerged beneath the veiled clamour of music and voices from the saloon. The coast-lights, pricks in the darkness, were no less remote than the sweep of stars reaching down towards them. The ship moved as if borne forward by a gentle wind, unhandled, like the chest of Danaë, alone in an infinity of space and time. From the window, as they passed, they could hear Gilderslee's voice, thicker now and even more sentimental, booming through the strains of Schumann's *Schlummerlied*:

'Ships that path in the night, and sloot one another in pathing.'

"Pawlmawr," Andrew said, "makes me wonder whether God is dozing."

Reaching the companion, he caught her by the arm. "We'll go up higher," he said, "there'll be less noise." Walking forward, on the boat-deck, he still had her arm in his. But he was looking away from her, and his voice, when he spoke, was wholly impersonal. "I like fun. But people should be quiet on this sort of night. You don't get a landfall like this once in a dozen journeys. The sea still like this, and the night so clear."

They had reached the forward rail, and he was staring as if he could see something invisible to her in the darkness. He let go her arm abruptly, as if she had done something to offend him.

"But what can you do?" he demanded, turning to face her. "You can sell all that you have and give to the poor, but a place like that is dead, stinking. It would be like blood transfusion to a corpse. What difference would it make to Pawlmawr if I distributed my clothes in the streets? Or do you think that's just a cloak for humbug? What I mean is this: you have some object in view, and you can't move a step towards it without seeing a hundred worthier objects at every crossroad. (It's cold on this deck, we must go down again.) You can't really make any progress unless you've got a positive gift for selfishness. It's all very well for Kant to blather about the Good Will. The Good Will, if it's a motive force at all, is like a cyclone. It never drives you in any one direction for a day at a time. (Gilderslee's still going well, isn't he?) However, one must be patient, I suppose. I've written nearly seven thousand words to-day. Very uplifting to the human race. What have you been doing, have you finished your jumper?"

"I've done one sleeve. That's pretty good, isn't it? in—what would it be?—a thousand miles?"

She moved away from him, her attention caught by something out at sea; turned, where an electric bulb threw a garish light on one side of her face, and stretched her arms back to the rail, surveying him whimsically; her thin coat stretched back upon her stocky form. She said, smiling:

"If I worried about things like you do, about what a person can achieve if he only sleeps two hours in every twenty-four, I'd be as thin as a ghost."

"Would you?" he said, trying hopelessly to imagine it. "But I'm not worrying, not on this sort of evening, only a bit exasperated. Besides, you've got your job all fixed. You've got a man to look after."

"I suppose so."

She had not thought of it like that. Doing things for Sandy, yes—but he wasn't the sort of person anyone could look after.

"Anyway, you're as thin as I'm fat," she said.

He looked at her quite earnestly.

"No, you're not fat," he said. "Fat people bulge."

But she hardly noticed the jerry-built compliment. She was thinking of Sandy, of looking after Sandy; wondering if that were a work sufficient to absorb her life's energy, wondering at the same time if she could manage it by herself. She thought, remotely: 'But he's not a lonely person, like this one; easier to look after them when they're lonely.'

The gramophone, carelessly tended, allowed the Marche Militaire to swoon into silence, and the voice of Mr. Gilderslee, now lilting sleepily, rode out again into the crisp air. '*Some time, some place, upon another sea. Ships that pass, ships that pass, ships . . .*'

Greta said: "I do wish you—" and stopped abruptly. He did not press her to complete her question, but turned

and crossed the deck, paused there, and came back to her. She had moved away from the light, then, and he could no longer see her except as a coated form in the shadow.

He would have liked to stretch out and feel her hand to see if it were cold again, but something prevented him. Not prudence, for his reason slumbered. Franz was distant in his mind, farther than Franz had been since the voyage started; and the moment in which he lived was cut off from past and future by an enchantment he would not break with word or movement. It was enough by itself to satisfy his spirit and his senses. Even the pity of it was dear to him; a flame, live and scorching, which kindled an emotion he had not learnt before, richer and more tender than all the colours of his experience, releasing a new power, bringing warmth to every vein of his consciousness. The night breeze, colder but still gentle, blew across his face, and he felt it as time flowing past him, drifting as the coast-lights drifted while they two stood, motionless, neither closer nor farther from each other, as the unbroken moment stretched out to hold them. It was a stranger beside him, her body in shadow and her soul hidden deeply. But he could keep her there, till time intervening caught and dragged them forward, by his own quiescence, by the strength of his pity. He thought that they were two figures carved one of bronze and one of marble; like marble, her face light in the shadow against the dark colour of his coat; sculptured by the same artist, sold to different buyers, placed at last —by chance and carelessly—together in a corner of a deserted gallery; turned to face each other, to gaze for ever with eyes carved blind upon living faces, one suffering and the other pitiful. There, in that still

gallery, with the noises of the street's traffic subdued by the intervening quietness, they would stand untroubled by the impudent gaze of sightseers. There, with the image given them by their creator, having no will but to pity and to suffer, no consciousness of time nor fear of destruction, they could hold fast the essence of their secret living, seeking neither cause nor effect, content with their eternal nearness.

But the smoke-room had become too hot, even for ardent frowsters, and like rabbits before the reaper's scythe the company began to burst out in twos and threes upon the deck, laughing and singing *Auld Lang Syne* with little barks of pseudo-Scottish enjoyment. Sandy in the midst of them, dancing a landsman's hornpipe and shouting, "Where's my girl? Who's gone off with my little woman?" Greta went to him, and catching her by the waist he danced her boisterously to the forward end of the deck and back again, the company hilariously cheering. "And what have you been doing, young puss?" he shouted. "I know what you've been doing, flirting with the professor! You're a bad lass, you are!" And there, with the light from the saloon door full upon them, with half a dozen men and a trio of women joyously staring, he very affectionately kissed her.

Andrew, who had remained in the shadow, saw it happen. Impotent, he made his way aft, unseen, and went below.

¶ The cabin was no whit altered, and its flagrant untidiness, clothes, papers and cigarette-ends everywhere, had assumed an unforgettable familiarity. The doorway curtain still hung on seven of its twelve hooks, the double crack across the mirror was the same. But the port which had framed the Pawlmawr quay dwindling to a

row of haloed arc-lights showed now, beneath pale sunshine, a stretch of smooth water, deeply blue, and the white hulls of racing-yachts riding at anchor on the other side of the bay; beyond, white houses placed sparingly on the side of a pine-crowned hill. In her sudden delight at the picture she forgot the grey, tumbling seas that had intervened and wondered only at the magic of a new landscape painted at her bedside while she slept; a new world achieved without the intervening stress of platforms and waiting rooms, of climbing into high French trains and carrying suitcases and arguing with taxi-drivers. Sandy was asleep still, and she could wash and dress in comparative comfort. She woke him, with a wet sponge flung carelessly, as she was leaving the cabin. On deck she found only Dr. Paillard, drawing thoughtfully at his cigar and regarding the empty quay with faint suspicion. The customs, it appeared, were not yet awake; neither was the Bennett courier. Without either body nothing could be done and no one was stirring. From the town, brown and white against the distant pines, light smoke rose everywhere, and in one of the three steeples a bell clanged fitfully; but as far as could be seen from the *Oenexia's* upper deck no one responded. "It is somnolent past all measure," Paillard said, and they went down to breakfast together. Andrew did not appear at breakfast. As passover, the meal was more carelessly observed than ever, the coffee colder, the toast burnt abominably: only Guller, as usual, was making a feast of it, stuffing himself in silence with prolonged concentration. Neither did Andrew appear afterwards, on deck or in the saloon. She was afraid to ask for him. But when, after a frantic hour of packing, she and Sandy were going ashore, the man at the top of the gangway handed her

a note. It was a sheet of paper torn in half and folded into a billet. The printed words: *School of Oriental Studies. The Hallidale Reader in Oriental Literature and Philosophy will lecture in the North School on Wednesdays* . . . had been crossed out, and the note was addressed 'To Captain and Mrs. Brissaut.' Greta, fully laden, took it in her teeth, and they went down to the quay, where a cab or two were mingled with the concourse of trolleys and market carts. They sat laughing and cursing as their victoria, which Sandy had chosen because he thought the man had an Irish look, bounced on its too-easy springs over the uneven paving. The harbour road swept round into an avenue of trees and kiosks which, as it went on towards the heart of the town, took on a bank or two, a showy dressmaker's and a tourist agency, till it became at last the principal street. They were opposite the Societetshus when a taxi passed them and Sandy said:

"Look! There's the professor!"

She just saw him as the taxi turned the corner, only the side of his head. She thought: 'I won't see him again.'

"I think this note's from him," she said.

They were running on macadam now and her hands were free. She opened the note and read: 'I am sorry I did not have a chance to say goodbye. Do look me up when you're back in England, or at any rate write. (All Souls Coll. Oxon.) ANDREW WILD.'

"Now that's very decent of him!" Sandy said. "A nice fellow, I thought, no side at all, for all his book-learning. Are you feeling quite all right, darlin'?"

3

At the Otava Hotel there was a pleasant bustle all the year round. It was the largest in Kaustborg, the dearest and most Americanized, Number One on the agents' lists, with an alarming supplement in the High Season. Out of season the restaurant and bar and lounges were filled with German and American business men, with old-fashioned sportsmen in close tweed knickerbockers, with professional tourists breaking the journey on their way to or from Leningrad, the younger bourgeois gentility of Kaustborg itself, a sprinkling of idle Swedes. Everyone talked about Russia, though most of the pitiful refugees had gone now; many talked quietly and earnestly with the air of having inside knowledge, others repeated the rumours which tradesmen brought every morning with the milk and groceries; the supply was unfailing; no one had the smallest reliable information except the travellers, who were too busy writing their journals and too jealous of each other to impart what little they had managed to observe. Only the special enquiry bureau established on the second floor for the benefit of refugees disclaimed all knowledge. 'No, there is no news,' the clerk mechanically repeated all day long. 'No, we know nothing. There is nothing fresh from Leningrad, nothing you can believe from Moscow. Beyond the frontier it's all a blank, all darkness. You can't believe anything. We don't know what's happened to anyone.'

Keel liked it better than any hotel he had ever visited.

¶ Andrew had meant to put up at the Otava with the rest of his party, but the Delapoutières, whose ideas of hospitality belonged to their former income, insisted that he must stay at their bijou villa across the bay. There Phelhove, quite grown-up at last and stupendously healthy, came to dine. Madame Delapoutière, still as quick-handed and as amiable as she had been ten years before, fussed over the smörgasbord, talked *sotto voce* in Andrew's ear, and resolutely steered the conversation away from Russia. But the General, who had seemed to be listening intently to Phelhove's account of a shooting-trip, came back to it again and again. He was much feebler than when Andrew had seen him last, sharp to take some of the points in conversation but wandering as soon as he had the table himself. "It is not that I want to recover anything—anything," he repeated. "But what have they done, or made? Is there less suffering? Who is happy? Tell me that—who is happy? *Personne, je l'avoue !*"

When Madame had put the old man to bed she brought her guests coffee and cigarettes, spoke for a moment or two —"He is getting old, you know, he dreams every night that he is back, and often in the daytime too"—and left them. "I know," she said, "you have plans to make."

Phelhove went to the windows and shut them. In the evenings he liked to be warm. And for a time they smoked in silence while the Strasbourg clock on the General's escritoire said *Dugla, dugla*. Looking at Andrew, at the brown skin that seemed to fit his face too tightly, the distant, gentle eyes, the high veins in the brown hand resting on his knee, Phelhove realized acutely his own metamorphosis. He felt that he was upon a visit to an hour in his past; not a distant hour:

so near indeed that he could forget—if the clock would not intrude so harshly—the intervening time. Wild had changed; had drawn back a little within himself; he was tired and slightly nervous, plainly he had been overworking. But it was the same man sitting there, wearing the same clothes, making the little familiar gestures he had always made; rubbing with his thumb the side of his middle finger, cautiously manœuvring his lips before he spoke; the same voice, a sober dress cut well and simply for the thoughts which emerged, slowly, from a packed arena. It was Phelhove who had altered, so prodigiously that he could almost feel paternal. Wild, after all, was a dreamer, moving in an unreal world; one met that kind, among the hundred others which crossed one's path, week in, week out. A hundred men and women, each with his sense of personal importance, his private eagerness; one soothed them, cajoled, directed, with patience or formality as the case required. It was curious, but here was Wild among the number, no less eager and ignorant than the rest. It would be rather difficult, it would require some tact, to make it plain that he had come to Kaustborg after the wildest of geese; with a whole party too; four of them, he had said at dinner. It was such a pity that people did not inquire more closely, from those on the spot, before making such fantastic decisions. Even the most sensible went astray. To look at Wild you would think him the emblem of sanity, of that deep, almost religious sanity which matures in minds schooled by vigorous reason. Five years ago he could not have doubted it. But now, with a larger experience, one realized the shortcomings of the academic mind. . . .

Andrew was distrait and unusually slow in coming to the point. He said, guarding what was in his mind:

"You're looking awfully well. Do you like this place? Busy?"

Phelhove shook his head.

"Not yet. We wake up when the tourist season begins. It's queer, you know, how people want to make use of me. I'm supposed to be a sort of god-father-cum-Thomas Cook to every Anglo-Saxon who sets foot ashore here. They lose their luggage at Stockholm and want me to find it for them. They expect me to cable for them, and tell them the time and sell them postage stamps and recommend the best excursions. It's flattering, of course, but I don't feel it's quite what I'm paid for."

"No. And of course if it comes to that you're not paid to look after mad dons. However—have you got any more news?"

"Only that Grundmann's wandered off the edge of the earth. I told you I was going to meet McTerence? He flew over to Viborg and I had a day's fishing with him. He gave me a more detailed account than I could send you when I last wrote. No, we didn't catch anything. Well, Grundmann turned up in Moscow with about eighty cases of luggage. I'm not exactly sure how many. The theory is they were chock-full of Bibles, every one of them."

"Probably——"

"But anyway, they weren't opened, God knows why not. And in Moscow our friend was a hell of a success. They knew, of course, that he'd been in prison in Rosczell, and they wrote him up a bit in the news. They knew he was a parson of some sort too, but he didn't rub it in, and they kept him away from the temples of atheism, and they all got on fine. He made out he was representing some kind of pseudo-socialist organization,

and they gave him the odd supper in a workers' chapel, and he made a rousing speech in one or other of the languages they didn't understand, and everyone thought it was jake. (Thanks, I'd rather smoke my own.) You know, I can't help thinking the man was a bit of a casuist, in a strictly evangelical sort of way. However, that's neither here nor there. Well, he kept smiling at everything they showed him, all their nice new German-pattern workers' flats and model factories that didn't work and all that sort of thing, and he kept on being more curious and interested and enthusiastic, and he got right away to Marolonsk, the timber place, cases and all. And that, mind you, was a hell of an achievement, because it's right beyond the tourist track and they just don't like people smelling about where they haven't got a perfectly good grip, as they haven't in that region. Well, he got there somehow and McTerence got news of him later on from an American engineer in charge of one of the sawmills. I gather he looked after Grundmann a good bit. According to him, Grundmann still wasn't satisfied. He wanted to go into the region between the Khanina and the Pessa. Have I got that map? Yes, here. Here, you see, that part. I've got a much better map at home, one McTerence got for me. I'll show it you on that later on. That was where he wanted to get to. He said they needed him there—'they' being a particularly uncouth tribe of Abakan Tartars. His idea, as far as McTerence could make out from what the American wrote him privately, was to convert everybody in that region to Christianity and then extend his mission westward. Of course the whole thing was a poop's pantomime, and to begin with, they weren't going to let him get any farther. They made that perfectly clear—they just didn't want

foreigners east of the Khanina. No, I don't know why not exactly. They may be doing something—mining, perhaps—something they don't want anyone to know about. Or it may be one of the places where their sociological notions just don't happen to work particularly well. It's reasonable, after all. We discourage our visitors from inspecting the Clydeside and Bethnal Green too closely. And of course Brother Ivan's had a bad press all along and he's inclined to be deuced cautious. Anyway, permission wasn't given. Grundmann was referred to Moscow and Moscow wouldn't stir one inch. The general feeling seemed to be that it was about time Herr Doktor Grundmann went back to Rosczell. But he seemed to find Marolonsk comfortable enough, though I'm told it's the foulest little one-horse place in the whole Union, and there he stayed put for about three weeks. Then he disappeared. Cases and all. Just vanished right off the map."

"But what do you think happened? Or rather, what does McTerence think? There must have been inquiries——?"

"Yes, formal inquiries, I suppose. But you know, one loses interest in that particular kind of lunatic. Berlin wasn't ever much interested, I imagine. I fancy the feeling there is that Grundmann got just exactly what was coming to him."

"But what's your own theory? Do you think they got tired of him and put him away?"

"No, I don't think so. After all, he was the personification of harmlessness by all appearances. No, I think he must have got transport somehow—he had money—and pushed off on his own account, after dark. The man he employed dumped him somewhere, and he either starved to death or froze. More probably the

latter. Of course someone may have seen him stumbling about when he wasn't wanted and taken a pot at him."

"I see."

Andrew had put his fingers together and was staring at something on the wall opposite. Phelhove regarded him with faint amusement—it brought back memories, Wild in that attitude. He felt as if he were back again in that room at All Souls where the ceiling sloped so steeply that he could only stand upright in the centre, as if he had just finished reading an essay, and Wild, after a silence of fully five minutes, would say 'But are you not limiting your field unjustifiably by your purely *a priori* approach? And by the way, are you sure it was Hegel who said that? It sounds to me much more like our friend Pearson of New College. . . .' But the silence was ended abruptly.

"While I think of it: there's a man staying here called Brissaut, Captain Brissaut, an Irishman, I think he's at the Central. With his wife. He was on the *Oenexia*. I'd be grateful if you'd keep an eye on him and see where he goes. You could find out, couldn't you, somehow or other? I've no idea how long he's here for—it's a honeymoon trip. He may go straight home. But I'd like to know where he goes."

"Why, have you lent him money?"

"No, I'm just interested in him. You could find out, couldn't you? Someone could inquire at the hotel. Or is it too much trouble?"

"Not a bit. But you'll be here yourself for some time, won't you? I'm not going to let you go too soon now I've got you here at last."

"That depends. Of course I'd like to see all I can of you. The first question is, will the authorities let me get to Marolonsk?"

"I can answer that straight off. They won't. McTerence was clear on that. Marolonsk is scheduled 'off' for foreigners. One proved to be enough."

"Then how far do you think I can get?"

"Well, nowhere near there."

"But seriously, did McTerence say there wasn't a hope of getting on to Grundmann's tracks."

"Definitely. In fact he told me to tell you. He knew you were coming out."

"Not if I asked him to make special application? He could tackle Buchkof—Buchkof knows me, he could probably do something."

"I honestly don't think so. Buchkof? Who is he? Oh yes, I know the man you mean. But I fancy he's not in particularly good odour at the moment. In any case, why should he, however much he loves you? And for that matter, what could you do, even supposing you got to Marolonsk? They'd all be as dumb as oxen about Grundmann, and you certainly wouldn't get any farther—they'd see to that. I expect someone got his tail twisted over Grundmann, and they won't let that sort of thing happen twice. You know, Brother Ivan can be damned thorough when he's got his mind set on one particular job."

"That's not my general experience. However, if McTerence was quite definite, I shall have to approach by other routes."

"You mean?"

"Why, by sea. Oh, yes, I'll get a ship all right. I know the man to get, a Norwegian, Oldersen. He'd take me anywhere. So there's no real difficulty."

"Until you land——"

"And that will not be insuperable."

"But Wild, I don't think—if I may say so—you've

got the vaguest idea of the conditions. I do wish you'd had a talk with McTerence—he could have told you something. You don't realize that their system stretches into every square mile of the Union. You land without permission, you're seen, apprehended, then what? If you——"

"And you on your part—excuse my interrupting—don't realize what a lot of trouble I've taken already. For instance, you haven't been introduced to Matt yet. He, among other things, is the finest liar that I've been able to find in the five continents. If they caught him with all the crown jewels in a portmanteau, he would say he'd bought them in the Caledonian Market and they'd believe him. Yes they would. Then as to——"

"And another thing—a mere detail, of course—the ice won't break up for two months yet. And until it does——"

"Two months? Less than that, I think. There again I've made one or two inquiries. You see, I rather foresaw this position. Knowing Grundmann as I do, and having heard—oh, more than a year ago now—what he was aiming at, I realized there was a job ahead. Oh yes, I tried to stop him before he started. But I never really hoped to do that. When I heard he'd got to Leningrad I was reasonably convinced that he'd go right through to the Khanina. Authorities or no authorities. Franz is like that. I don't know another man who's quite so childishly stupid over maps. And yet he can find his way in places where other people would infallibly walk in circles."

"Then you think, definitely, that he may still be alive?"

"It's at least possible."

"And you think you can find him? You've been in that part of the world before, I suppose?"

"No. At least, I've been to Oleminsk. I did a journey there from Chita—just an excursion. But that's quite different country. I think if——"

"And if you do find him?"

Andrew shrugged his shoulders.

"I may get him to come back."

"That is, if you can get back yourself."

"Yes, of course. At any rate I shall have done what I can. And you know, I'm reasonably optimistic. I've got a good party—three very tough lads and an excellent surgeon. If Oldersen——"

Phelhove, rising in his earnestness, cut him short.

"Wild, if I thought you'd got a ghost of a chance I'd do everything I could to help you. I'd chuck up my job and come with you, honestly I would. If I thought you had one chance in a hundred even of making your landing and not getting arrested I'd give you my blessing. But knowing what I do——"

"But look here, why worry about my plans? You've been an enormous help in letting me know what's happened; and seriously, not meaning to hurt your feelings, it's not your business what——"

"I'm not sure. Officially—well of course I wash my hands of the obstinate Englishman. But personally—I mean, what is there about this fellow Grundmann which——"

"He's one of my oldest friends. He's got me out of trouble before now. And what is perhaps more important, his death would be a serious loss to Theology. He's not sixty yet."

"But there are other theologians, are there not?"

"Yes. Oh yes. But not of that calibre. His work on Pauline Ethics alone——"

"Yes, but does theology matter to all that extent?"

"Matter? Well, heresy it may be, but I personally have always regarded metaphysics merely as the foundation—the only sure foundation—of theological inquiry. Spinoza, I grant you, was so hasty in——"

"And for that matter, are metaphysics so supremely —I mean——"

"Important? Well, not according to the ordinary view. The subject is generally regarded as one useful for passing examinations. A good thing to be through with, like whooping cough. But it happens that my life has been more or less devoted to it, so perhaps it's natural that——"

"I know. My dear Wild, I wouldn't dream of taking the ordinary view. But aren't you just arguing in favour of my thesis? It's throwing good money after bad. It may be a tragedy if Grundmann's lost—I take your word for that. But can we afford to lose you too? I don't mean personally—you know how I feel about that. But I mean—you're not a type one finds all over the place. And with Europe going the way it is, we can't afford——"

Andrew had begun to walk about the room, placing his steps with cautious accuracy on the repeated motif of the carpet.

"Now wait! I want you to be as clear about this as I am. I believe in my own work, or I wouldn't do it. I believe the world's got to keep a certain number of idle men thinking, so as to preserve and advance its ideology; ready for the time—if it ever comes—when the practical people find there's no scope for being practical any more and want something else to live with beside what they've made in their factories. I believe that reason is the greatest of God's gifts to men, and that it ought to be worked out to the limit of its powers,

just as good soil ought to be made as productive as it possibly can be. But as between me and Grundmann, when you come to compare essential values, I choose Grundmann. You needn't agree with me, but I hold unwaveringly that man's knowledge of God is more important than his knowledge of man—whatever that little rat Pope thought about it. If hunting for Grundmann wasn't a reasonable object, I wouldn't go. I realize there's a certain risk attached, and I don't like taking risks. In fact, I've never taken an unnecessary risk in my life—except during the war, when one did it from time to time because one didn't like the idea of other people taking risks for one. And moreover, my private inclinations happen at the moment to be against the trip. But I'm not going to have a mind like Grundmann's lost without making an effort to save it, even if no one else in Europe realizes the man's importance. Oh yes, he may have been a fool to go, but that was for him to decide—and Franz never made a decision carelessly. But apart from any opinion one may hold about the sanctity of human life—and the war only strengthened mine—a life like that has value out of all proportion to the work of the *persona*. You don't often find it, Phelhove, you don't find once in ten years a mind as disinterested as Franz's—and as creative at the same time. The fuss people make about one Corot, done in his worst period, if it gets stolen! And a living Corot, a mind with the same depth and the same sensibility to every semitone in the sweeping orchestration of the universe, gets left without a shout for rescue, destroyed by the passionate force of its own response to God and humanity. I'm sorry. Only I feel like that. It's decent of you to try and stop me going, but when I think how a few years back we were all sacrificing our-

selves at an altar of tribal emotion, it seems to me pure madness to avoid the trifling risk in attempting to save one of the really precious things we've got left. I'm not being generous, I'm only being rational. . . ."

Dead as it was before the season, Kaustborg appeared to swarm with correspondents; pleasant youngsters, mostly, being tried out by the senior European journals before their removal to more important centres. Usually Keel's suavity satisfied them, and only one or two were so truculent as to require Matt's more uncompromising methods. Keel, as scribe to the party, had occupied much of his time agreeably enough in composing, with the help of Butterwick's *Flora and Fauna of Scandinavia,* a sufficiently plausible account of the party's plans for collecting natural history specimens in the catchment of the Tuntsa; it was widely distributed and in due course published in modified form as far south as Szeged and west as Shrewsbury. Kelvin Horsfield of the *Chicago Telegraph* gave the most trouble, in his peculiar way. He was a courtly old Virginian, invariably morning-coated, with the language of Steele and Addison and the accent of a metropolitan Justice. They liked him, and becoming increasingly friendly invited him to dinner. Matt, curiously, was responsible for this rashness, but the old gentleman behaved perfectly, deliberately avoiding all reference to the expedition's plans. It was only as he was leaving that he mentioned the subject. "If you gentlemen would care to give me some information for my paper about your plans, I would regard it as an especial favour." Keel had a carbon copy of his article all ready for him. And next day Horsfield returned it. "I have read your article with the greatest interest and pleasure," he said. "It is, if I may say so,

extremely well-written, and the subject-matter withstands all adverse criticism. I would add, however, that since you evidently wish to keep your real plans secret, I shall avoid all reference to the subject in my despatches. I must thank you again for an excellent dinner. . . ."

Paillard patiently examined the monuments: the Church of St. Nicholas, the Guild House, the Alexander Cross. Gazing long and earnestly at the second-rate copies of Greek statuary in the Torger Museum, he concluded, having modesty as well as a good taste, that there must be a mote in his own eye rather than a beam in Herr Baedeker's. While Guller, abroad for the first time and bored to distraction, pursued the sprightly maidens in the Kitka-Gatan and silently fed them on pâtisseries. Matt, when he was not arguing with Keel about the Soviet, spent most of his time in the harbour, listening with insatiable curiosity to the polyglot conversation of sailors, happy if at the end of an hour he had learnt a new Norwegian oath or the Estonian term for a running-bowline. Of the five men, he alone, perpetually unruffled and easy-going, seemed entirely unimpatient. To Andrew's reiterated apology—"I'm afraid this business is going to cost you an awful lot of money, Matt"—he had always the same unaffected reply: "Money? My dear man, money means nothing to me. I've got bags of it."

Andrew journeyed twice a day, sometimes on foot and sometimes in the little tramcar, between the Delapoutière villa and the Otava, more taciturn than usual, inwardly nervous and restless. He had written to McTerence for more detailed information, if such were available. He had appealed in a personal letter to Buchkof for permission to travel at any rate as far as

Marolonsk. At the same time, he had addressed a letter to Oldersen at Balsfjord, explaining the situation and begging him to hold himself in readiness. He was in touch with the Meteorological Station at Berlevaag, which had promised daily bulletins on the ascertainable ice conditions between the thirtieth and ninetieth parallels. With Matt's assistance he had made the life of the freight clerks at the North Station unbearable. There was nothing left to do. If the journey had to be by sea, they might as well wait here, among the comforts of a town big enough to support two theatres, as at Vadsö; where Oldersen could hardly arrive in less than ten days and whence, in any case, it was useless to start before the ice reports were favourable. But for himself, he wanted to be done with Kaustborg. It was enchanting as it had always been, in the clear northern sunlight, the winter's winds reduced now to a quickening breath of coolness; with its wide boulevards, its three graceful stone bridges spanning the torrential Kajvalo, the ancient Swedish houses leaning over the Skaraborg-Gatan; with its pretty solemnity, its varnish of modern decoration worn as a child wears the fashionable jewels of an elder cousin. He liked the gaiety of its cafés and the smartness of its women, he relished the exquisite cooking and perfect lager as one who might not taste those pleasures again. He felt better in health than he had been for months, warmed by the sunshine and the people's friendliness. But the days passed, no news came from Moscow, he was lonely for the first time in his life and Kaustborg sharpened his loneliness, lending it the colour of pathos. It would be different, he thought, when he had put Kaustborg behind him.

Here he could neither work nor enjoy idleness. As a guest, he felt himself sadly lacking in politeness, but

Madame Delapoutière was constantly sympathetic. She dragged her husband away when he sought to prolong his reminiscences, reminding him "Andrew must be by himself, he has reading to do. His work is important, we must not take up his time." But alone in his bedroom, where a little writing-table had been installed for him and a shelf for his books, he gazed blankly at the bare paper before him, writing nothing, unable to read. It was perhaps the liveliness of the air, he thought, which made him unable to concentrate. He had finished one chapter of his book since landing, and that would have to be done again—the arrangement of the premises was confused and the conclusion ambiguous. More than once Guller came out to read with him after his hosts had gone to bed, and with Guller he would walk back, after midnight, as far as the hotel, returning to the villa by himself. He turned off his road, one night after Guller had left him, and made his way to the harbour, tired, but anxious to hold off the clutch of sleep. The *Oenexia* still lay at the South Quay, apparently forsaken. On that landing the lamps had been turned out, and she was veiled thinly by the light mist hanging over the water. The tide was in, and her superstructure was reared high above the quay-level. As he passed close against her, wondering that her dark, straight flanks could have framed so amply a fortnight of his life, he caught the frail odour issuing from an open scuttle and recognized it: the *Oenexia's* own odour, different from that of any other ship he had sailed in. He turned then, and having answered a man's challenge at the harbour entrance, bore right to walk into the town again beside the river. The deliberate portion of his mind was totalling fares and freight-charges, converting markka into sterling; but behind, where his brain was

fatigued and mournful, he wondered what he had said, that foggy night when all the sirens were booming, and could remember nothing but foolishness; easy words, delivered in the social voice he used for strangers, a gentle parody of his inner feelings; nothing that could stay in the memory of a chance acquaintance. It was better so; to no one was there any comfort in remembering a stranger. Yet the sense of missed opportunity, of a moment's beauty which had escaped him, persisted as the lights of the Runeberg bridge came towards him. (Yes, it would cost Matt a tidy penny, this business; but Matt had volunteered, and no one knew better than he—trained by a mine-owning father—the value of his own money.) The avenue sloping to the left went straight through the centre of the town, and if he bore left again at the Societetshus he would be on his way home. But at the corner of Uleaborg-Gatan he stopped. The Central Hotel was a hundred yards along to the right, and he could see its electric sign from where he stood. To walk as far as that and back again would take less than three minutes, and he could permit himself that much; in a few days he would be hundreds of miles away. He found one door of the hotel still open, and yielding to impulse went inside. The night-porter, a retired soldier by the way his neck was held back against the collar of his uniform, asked what he wanted. "You have a Mr. Thomas here?" he asked. "No? Are you certain? May I see the register, please?" Reluctantly the man allowed him. Yes, their names were here, Captain and Mrs. Brissaut, British, Room 17; but nothing to show if they had gone. When he tried to ask, his courage failed him, and he said simply "You are quite right, I apologize." The way home was now familiar, and his feet once set upon it would take him there with-

out his conscious direction. The street lamps passing did not touch his awareness, only entered his mind to remain as visual clothing for his thoughts when he would recall them. His impulsive act had done nothing to relieve him. 'Probably I was in the same building,' he thought, 'probably, as I stood in the vestibule, she was asleep right over my head. Possibly she went to sleep crying.' In the knowledge that he might have been so near her there was no pleasure, only a sense, new to his experience, of hard frustration. He sought to analyse this new gamut of sensations, to reduce them to terms of familiar mental process; but his mind, still fiddling provocatively with rates of exchange, was unequal to the labour. 'It is dangerous,' he repeated, 'to pity when pity can do nothing, can promote no action'; while his imagination sought to describe her face upon a white pillow. He must get away from Kaustborg, he must steadfastly avoid the harbour where the *Oenexia* was still lying. Franz was all that mattered, and Franz might perish while these unsubstantial concepts, warnings perhaps of premature senility, were leading him to behave like a student attacked by poesy. He quickened his step and crossed to the other side of the tramlines. But as far as the villa gateway her voice pursued him, in meaningless phrases, in parts of sentences: '*a sort of honeymoon*' . . .

There was a telegram from Buchkof next morning. Only two words. 'Impossible. Regrets.'

¶ Summer broke in on the morning of their departure, brilliant to atone for its delay. The wind overnight had turned and dropped to quietness, and the sun, rising in an empty sky, burnt the still air above the town to fall upon the wide pavements unresisted. Kelvin

Horsfield, early abroad, paraded the Kitka-Gatan in his English boater, and to the townsmen it was sufficient omen. Jackets were off in some of the shipping-bureaux, and the little Swiss who for three weeks already had mournfully pushed his ice-cream barrow along the boulevards began to tinkle his bell with the energy of confidence. In the harbour after breakfast, saying good-bye to a Danish shipmaster, Matt saw a grey fritillary flying close to the surface of the water; appearing from the harbour mouth as if it had followed the sunshine from the southern shore of the Baltic. When it rested on a bollard close beside him he caught it to admire its marking. Released, it flew on towards the Runeberg Gardens as if it knew its way, above the tramcars and the darting Chryslers.

The change was felt instantly: and although the piping of soprano motor-horns was unabated, the pace of the town's activity had slackened. Remembering old summers, long days canoeing on Lake Ombala and bathing in the Bjovafjord, the clerks in the wholesale offices slouched between their desks and the filing cabinets. Customers at Jalander's were served slowly and hardly pressed for their other requirements, while outside the porters were already grumbling and errand boys refusing to hurry. When Matt arrived at the station the cases were still piled in the loading-shed, unregarded. His orders, perfectly understood and duly confirmed, had been that the whole consignment was to be on the trucks not later than nine. He found Keel fussing over a book he had lost, Andrew in silent anger with Jalander's for failing to send some equipment he had ordered. Paillard had unscrewed one of his medicine chests in the loading shed and was once more checking the contents. Guller, if Matt knew him, was saying farewell to a lady.

There was bother about seating; seats had been reserved in a carriage which did not go through. The guard was nowhere, and the elderly porter in attendance insisted that there were no through coaches. Andrew, when Matt came upon him for the second time, had reached a stage of dangerous flippancy. He was surveying the man with a far-away look, murmuring "Are you sure the train goes at all? You don't think the engine's just put there to prevent the thing slipping?" . . . "Matt, do for heaven's sake find a telephone and get on to the accursed Jalander again. And what on earth's happened to Guller? I suppose he's gone to the wrong station." But Matt at once took possession. "No, you go and ring Jalander. And rout out the station-master and bring him here. What language does this yokel talk? Here, you wasp-wit, get those traps out of this carriage. Don't argue with me, you septic cephalopod. . . ."

By eleven the cases were loaded, Guller found, personal luggage stowed in the right compartment. Paillard had gone off into the town for a further supply of potassium acetate, but he was reasonably sure to be back in time unless he lost his way again. Andrew sat down in a corner seat next the platform, took off his collar and tie for greater comfort, and opened the *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*. He could hardly contribute much of value to the hubbub, while Matt was still in full cry and Keel abetting him. He read nothing, but it was pleasant, in the shade of the carriage, to let his eyes rest on the leaves, to release them from the bustle and the hot sunshine. The heat had made him a little drowsy, had added remoteness to the object of the journey. He was glad that for the present he had nothing to do but to sit still, to let his thoughts wander,

to imagine, feeling the sweat on his forehead and smelling the hot bogie-oil, that an hour or two would see him walking between Oxfordshire hedgerows. The smell, the sun striking his wrist aslant through the carriage window, recalled a moment that he could not identify. Hamburg? Greece, the little train which crawled up the hill to Aspata? No, farther south than that. Franz was part of that hazy image, Franz had been sitting in the opposite corner. The moment had been imperfect, flavoured with anxiety; but it belonged to a better time. How far back, ten years, fifteen?

Keel's fist banged on the window, and he pulled it down. He saw then that there was quite a crowd outside the carriage. Madame Delapoutière, Phelhove, one or two familiar journalists, a group of students in little German caps, smiling very amiably; in the centre, an elderly man volubly talking. It was some time before Andrew realized that this personage was making a speech in Latin.

"It's the Professor of Botany and Horticulture from the local university," Keel told him. "The old fool's brought all these boys to wish us luck."

Madame Delapoutière stood rather awkwardly, anxious to come forward to the window but fearing to interrupt the ceremony. Matt was cursing steadily in *sotto-voce* Afrikaans. Guller, a little way off, looked frankly gloomy, and only Paillard, perspiring after his rush back to the station, was smiling with any success.

"They think I'm you," Keel said. "But you've damned well got to make the reply."

The station-master, present in person and seriously rattled by Matt's treatment, kept looking at his watch. But the Professor of Botany had not yet reached his peroration.

"It's no good," Keel muttered, "nothing will stop the old geyser. Why doesn't that fathead blow his whistle or something?"

A whistle sounded at last, with a tentative tirrup, farther down the train. The station-master said, almost in a whisper, "Your seats, gentlemen, please, if you don't mind." The Professor, slightly flurried by the signs of movement, finished abruptly with a little flourish of nimble latinity. Paillard, less confused than the rest, cried: "Mille, mille remerciments, cher ami!" and Matt hastened to his support. "Bloody fine effort!" he said.

"Go on!" whispered Keel. "Spout a few words! They expect a reply."

Madame Delapoutière was saying something, but Andrew could not hear her. He smiled and kissed her hand. His party had disappeared into the corridor, and there was a moment of supreme awkwardness. An errand-boy, arriving from nowhere, was thrusting a parcel through the window. The students stood in their places, still gravely smiling. The Professor of Botany repeatedly bowed.

"Gentlemen," Andrew began, raising his voice above the uproar, "the honour you have done us . . ."

His party were round him at the window now, recovered from their mirth and sublimely gracious. "Go on!" Keel urged. "Bung it in as warm as you can, they expect something pretty sugary."

". . . the sense of comradeship between the students of every nation. (Keel, will you hold your tongue!) We shall not soon forget your kindness in coming to . . ."

Matt had started a speech on his own account. "Friends, Romans, Countrymen, Ad ante ab in inter

GOVT. GIRLS COLLEGE SRINAGAR

de, Guller, you bastard, you're standing on my toe. Ob, sub super post and prae. Where's that blasted porter? Barbara celarent darii ferioque priores." The shouts and whistling had risen to a tempest, and the students were wildly cheering. The train began to move.

Saved from the necessity of finishing his speech, Andrew stood smiling and waving his collar. That, thank heaven, was the last of Kaustborg. His eyes swept the circle, now slowly moving to one side, for a last sight of Madame Delapoutière, but she had disappeared. He heard Guller say, "Who's that girl? Someone I know," and turning his head saw Brissaut's wife; two yards away, pressing between the students to get nearer. He could see that she had something she wanted to say. He leant forward, as far out as he could, but the train gathering speed bore him away from her, and he could only smile.

His smile was for her alone. She saw and reflected it, though her eyes were but faintly smiling. Her expression was one that he knew, one that was fixed in his mind already, the look she wore always in the tender vessel of his memory.

The impulse to leap up and drop out through the window was so strong that he hardly suppressed it. But Guller, already fearful for his safety, had him by the coat-tails. Until she was out of sight he went on smiling, smiling and waving, his smile for Greta only, seeing no one but Greta.

The white, wide-roofed houses slipped past the window; the train, already at three-quarters speed, swung left, sharply-banked, straightened to tear across Gunissen's viaduct and ran screaming through its channel in the pines. Andrew sat back and stared at the luggage-

rack, oblivious of Keel and Guller, oblivious of the carriage, hardly aware of his own body slumped in the corner. The others were rearranging their bags, opening magazines, striking matches. He heard Keel say, "I can't help loathing the idea of living with Matt for weeks on end. His feet stink already." Someone undid the parcel, revealing Kelvin Horsfield's card, two small butterfly-nets and a killing-bottle. But Andrew did not join in the laughter. The train ran northwards, a kilometre in fifty seconds. But he had not escaped from Kaustborg.

4

GULLER had patched the roof of the cabin quite skilfully, and had blocked up the end where the wall had tumbled. He was experienced in such work, for the home of his childhood in Holycock Terrace had constantly needed similar attention. But in the early morning, with a light rain blown smartly from the north-east, there was scant comfort in the gale-battered structure. The roof leaked in a dozen places, the draught penetrated to every corner. Andrew, rising early, had gone out with Guller and Sasiliv, leaving Matt to cook the muksun. He had them on the stove now and turned them with his knife when he thought of it, in the intervals of tinkering with his Winchester. To Paillard, who was kneeling near the entrance with his map spread on the ground before him, he spoke from time to time over his shoulder. "It's no good your looking at that dam map, Alphonse. We've already proved it wrong in every mile we've covered. You'd much better get a seventeenth-century chart of Atlantis and study that. And that compass of Andrew's doesn't work either. We're too near the Pole." Only Keel was still in his sleeping bag, lying on his stomach near the stove with his diary in front of him and a candle to light it. It was his first chance for days to bring the diary up to date, but now he dawdled, finding the work tiresome. He was weary after the exertions of the previous day. His hand, chafed and swollen, felt as if it had never held a pencil before, his brain was damp and flaccid. Turning back the pages,

he read an earlier entry with sombre amusement, feeling as if he had written it years before.

'Kaustborg has the mentality of Ashby de la Zouche, but is more diverse and decorative. The girls and the grocers, of whom the population is largely comprised, smile faintly as they go about their business, with a gentle surprise, as if they cannot quite believe that they are grown up and that no one can make them wash their hands for dinner. The soldiers, who are stiff and martial as any you would meet in the Wilhelmstrasse, seem nevertheless to realize vaguely that they are figures of supreme comedy . . . Matt and Paillard argue all the time about equipment. Paillard is always right and Matt always wins. But only Andrew really knows all about it—God knows how—and he, fortunately for all of us, is going to do all the buying. We can't buy extensively before we get definite news from Moscow.'

"Our friend is very studious," Paillard remarked. "Always with his book open."

"And doing not one dam thing to help," Matt added. "Of course, he's trying to justify his blasted public-school education."

Keel turned four pages and read on:

'. . . dead-alive place. However, one is thankful to have the journey over. The carriage was comfortable enough, but abominably hot, and I thought we should never get here. Matt arguing about something all the time. The trouble is that one can't help going his distance, even when he's trying to prove something wholly absurd. However, he has a singular capacity for getting things done. Guller grows on me, there is something so rich in his contentment. Alphonse, of course, is an adorable creature. Hotel here is cramped and smelly. Mosquitoes already very active.'

He looked up.

"Are you sure that fish isn't done yet? It stinks abominably."

Matt said: "It's not the fish. Go on with your clerking, if you can't do anything useful."

'. . . my first iceberg, and was very favourably impressed. I understand that farther north they come much larger, but this example was very well turned out and responded in a satisfactory manner to the sunlight . . . now definitely bored with icebergs, which are, however, the only features to break the monotony of this voyage. I have conversations with Oldersen, but his English is patchy and my Norwegian negligible. Moreover, he makes me suffer from an acute sense of inferiority. He is the storm-hardened mariner to the point of caricature, face carved out of red sandstone, Viking eyes that searched the horizon in the established Marryat manner. He has whaled in the Antarctic and sealed all round the coast of Greenland and stalked bears over every square mile of Labrador. Talks chiefly about his son, who is a student at Oslo. This trip he regards as a holiday-jaunt. It is against all reason, but I feel smaller every time I look at the man.'

"You're not writing much," Matt said.

"At any rate I'm not spilling rifle-oil into the breakfast."

'. . . landing (if this bog can be called land). Frankly, the most unpleasant experience I have ever had. I dislike the idea of being drowned in such extremely cold water. Andrew made us walk about fifty miles in the pitch darkness. To-day I feel flogged. I'm not sure if I'm physically up to this jaunt, though Paillard looks much feebler than I am. Here we are, anyway, and that settles it. Andrew has come right out of his

stupor, now that his manuscript is safely parked at Vadsö, and his determination is almost frightening. I believe he would cut my throat if he suspected cold feet; and when I come to think of it, there would be no trouble or risk in bumping me off in this locality. . . . I'm not sure if I shall go on with this diary. It's a nuisance to lug about, with all the rest of one's equipment. Yesterday it fell in the mud and was rescued by Matt, with appropriate sarcasm. If I'd accepted Melrose's invitation and gone to Egypt I might have been able to write a diary worth reading. To-day's programme, apparently:—carry boats about ten miles, and paddle about forty. Feeling stiff as a corpse.'

"I suppose," said Matt, "you're waiting till I've brought you your early-morning tea before you write anything."

Keel wrote:

'I wish to God I'd never started on this dam-fool expedition.'

"Look what we've found!" Guller shouted, appearing at the entrance.

Paillard uncurved, gathering up his map.

"Careful, please, Guller. Your feet are too big to go on this map."

Turning round, Matt said: "Blottso-staffe! Where did you find that?"

"Down that way," Guller answered, jerking his head, "crawling about in that blooming bog."

Keel, raising his head and looking against the light, could just discern the outline of a man standing the height of Guller's chest, long haired and so luxuriantly whiskered that his face was almost invisible.

"I don't like it," he said. "Take it away."

Andrew had arrived, talking earnestly to Sasiliv in

Yakut. He called "Matt, is that fish done? Can't you hot-up the stove! I want something for this fellow. He'll talk when he's eaten something. Sasiliv, make him come in. Tell him we won't hurt him. He's cold, poor old chap, he looks at least ninety."

"He smells," Matt said.

When the old man had been coaxed near the stove Keel had a better view. He could see his eyes now, brown and slanting, peering right and left with the movement of an animal's eyes, frightened, greedy, lit with the milky light of insanity.

"What is he?" he asked. "Chukchi?"

Andrew said: "No, definitely not. Looks like a Mougir. Do you think he'll tell us anything, Sasiliv?"

Sasiliv stood regarding the capture with gentle contempt.

"Perhaps," he said. "But a little alcohol may be necessary."

"Do you mean to tell me Stephen lives around here?" Matt asked.

"Impossible! Thrice impossible!" Paillard said.

Andrew shrugged his shoulders.

"Probably dumped. He's past being useful. But he seems to have kept himself alive. He was sucking a chir-bone when we found him. Keel, hadn't you better get up?"

Fascinated with the discovery, Paillard had begun to feed the Mougir with fish, gingerly, like an apprentice zoo-keeper.

"Try him with tea," Matt said. "Guller, that kettle's boiling. My hands are all over grease."

They breakfasted standing. There was a log or two to sit on, but they had lost the habit of sitting for meals. Andrew issued instructions between mouthfuls.

"Guller, I want that camera taken out of 4 and packed separately. I'm afraid of its getting damp. . . . That chest of Alphonse's must go on the raft this time, it's too heavy for my boat. Have you done anything about that leak, Matt? Well, you can do some baling. . . . Go on, Sasiliv, take another biscuit. No, tea's the only drink this meal. What did you say you thought it was to Esstoye? Seventy kess? I believe it's more. It must be thirty before you join the main stream. . . . Yes Guller, you can have one more. . . . Now Sasiliv, ask the old gentleman where he comes from, what he knows about this region."

But for a long time the Mougir would say only one word, with plaintive repetition, '*T'oula.*'

"What does he mean?" Keel asked, and Sasiliv grinned.

"Alcohol."

Bending to bring his face within an inch of the Mougir's, Sasiliv pursued his inquisition, repeating his questions again and again, accenting first one word and then another. The treatment was at length effective, the Mougir breaking suddenly into volubility. It seemed, then, that nothing would ever stop the flood of his eloquence. Sasiliv attended patiently, Andrew clicked his fingers, the others listened in amazement.

"What's he saying now?" Matt demanded.

"He says," Sasiliv answered, "that when he was a child his father beat him with the plet. And now that he is old, his sons beat him with birch rods."

"That is most interesting," Andrew said. "But what I want to know about is this place Esstoye. Is it inhabited or just a trapping post?"

The duologue continued. Sasiliv said at last: "He thinks we should go to Pestosk. That's the trade

centre, he says. He says he went there himself once, when he was a young man."

Andrew said, with a trace of exasperation: "Pestosk is the very place I want to avoid. If we got there they'd know all about us in Irkutsk in less than eight weeks."

Sasiliv began again, and announced presently: "He says Esstoye is inhabited by evil spirits."

"Then he does know the place. I want to find out if you can go on from there south-east. Look here, look at this map. Can you understand that? Yes, that's the river. Now look, this is where we are now. . . ."

An hour later Andrew was able to summarize the findings:

"You see this point here, where the river bends in a U. Now that, as far as I can gather, is the nearest we can get to Esstoye, by water. But there's a chance of getting bearers there; possibly deer, but they wouldn't be much use. At Esstoye we're stuck for a month at least. (You're clear about that, Sasiliv?) Yes, you see, south and east of Esstoye there's nothing but swamp for a hundred miles or more. Sasiliv's certain about that. It's impossible through the summer. We can't get any reliable information about Esstoye. There may be a povarnia, probably not, but we needn't rely on that anyway, and it's bound to be a better place to kick one's heels than this, for instance. With luck we shan't have to catch our own fish, for one thing. Well, is that much clear?"

Guller said: "A whole month! Crikey!"

"Yes, I'm sorry. Now the date is—Keel, where's that diary of yours?"

"It's a Tuesday, anyway," Matt said.

"No, it's a Saturday. Keel, what is the date?"

Paillard knew. "The seventeenth," he said.

Andrew checked it by his own pocket diary.

"That's right. And Oldersen said he'd lie-to till —when?—the twenty-sixth, wasn't it? That would give any of us a sporting chance of catching him, starting right away." He rubbed his nose energetically, smiling faintly as he did when his thoughts were running, and went on, in the low, cautious voice with which he coaxed philosophy pupils round awkward corners. "I see no real difficulty about making Esstoye. Practically none about getting to Lust. From there the chances of reaching Os-Yefta are about one in three, and at Yefta, if the news has travelled, we may get stopped. The chances of getting across the Khanina work out—according to my calculations—at about one in seven. That's from here. Possibly one in five—I may be too pessimistic, but I don't want to under-rate the obstacles. Having crossed the Khanina, the chances of finding Grundmann —alive—are perhaps one in twenty-five or thirty. Of course that's guesswork. And you can put against that the fact that I've always been strangely lucky. The question before the committee is, then, do we go on? I am, myself, but——"

"May as well," Matt said.

"And you, Alphonse?"

Paillard said, with a flash of dignity: "I am attached to the expedition, and responsible for its health."

"What about you, Guller?"

"I'd like a go."

Keel stood in the doorway, gazing sombrely across the desolate tundra.

"And you, Keel?"

Keel nodded.

Andrew said: "Well, Sasiliv has promised to get us as far as Esstoye. And by the way, we've wasted half

the morning. Now our friend Methuselah here presents a minor problem . . ."

Resting his paddle for the first time in half an hour, Guller said suddenly:

"We've done this bit before."

Andrew said: "Don't stop paddling, there's a good fellow. We can't afford to, against this stream. I'll give you a proper rest soon—two o'clock."

They dug together and recaptured the lost rhythm. Then Andrew asked:

"Done it before? When?"

"I d'know. Sometime yesterday."

"That's hardly likely."

"We might be going in a circle."

"But always upstream?"

"M! I see what you mean. But it does look like it, this bend. I was dreaming, and I thought, all of a sudden, 'Crikey! I've done this before.'"

Andrew said: "Well, I'm not surprised. How are your hands now?"

"Better."

But the new blisters had broken, and the water running up the paddle-shaft made them smart acutely. He wore mittens—they would stick and be the devil to get off afterwards—but their protection was insufficient. They rubbed, moreover, and wrinkled into damp folds which chafed and bit the skin of his lower finger-joints. He would have had them off, only Andrew wouldn't give him that much time. Each stroke now brought a sharp pain. In fifty or a hundred strokes he became so accustomed that he could almost forget it; but it altered then, attacking a new nerve or piercing an old one more acutely. It would have been comforting then to

let go a little cry, regularly, each time the pain came. The tips of his fingers were still white, and somehow the blood would not go into his feet, though his ears were burning.

The first shutava, with Matt and Sasiliv, had got well ahead and was quite out of sight. Keel and Paillard, labouring on the raft, had been passed an hour before and were now two miles or more in the rear.

They rounded the bend and came into a straight piece, running at least a mile before the right bank swung round to cut it off. It was Andrew, then, who could have sworn against his reason that they had covered that very stretch earlier in the day. But why? There was no landmark, save the trunk of a larch which rested on its passage to the sea, oddly and precariously held by an out-jutting hump of rock. The banks were low here, and mounted in the bows on a tea-box he could see, with a turn of his head, the whole extent of the tundra as far as eyesight would carry, dun-coloured, flecked with iron-grey and patches of dull green, meshed widely by the courses of vanished streams, without trees, without live grass, without boundaries. At this hour the light was very clear. The wind, cold and damp against his skin, still blew from the same quarter, unchanged in velocity, not in sharp and wilful currents but as a continent of air advancing in unhindered motion across the earth's easy surface; dustless, and carrying no cloud, leaving the steady fall of light untroubled by its gigantic progress. From above, like the summer sky of Italy reflected in deep, still water, vaporous but taut-stretched and motionless, the sky curved down to the limit of the eye's reach and kept pace, itself unmoving, with the creeping shutava, so that the boat's wriggle along the twisted, flowing river seemed to win no advance-

ment. Only the water moved; the landscape was fixed, a picture done by a painter with a sense of tones but none of arrangement or perspective. The movement of the banks, bending, rising and falling a little, widening and narrowing, seemed only a flattery, a counterfeit of covered distances. Another day half-gone, with no change, nothing to mark accomplishment.

"I agree with you," he said over his shoulder, "it's dull going."

But it wasn't that, Andrew knew it wasn't. At Oxford there was the excitement, the huge enlargement of experience; so much to do, the perpetual chase from the Union to Barnett House, from Barnett House to the Radcliffe, after a book that everyone seemed to want that particular week; the endless, happy struggle to keep pace, to recover lost ground, to become acquainted with the thousand facts that all the rest had learned in the nursery. And besides, you could be at Paddington in ninety minutes, foreign ground, but a bus-ride from home. It had come upon Guller first at Pawlmawr station, where he had seen the London train go off (*Gloucester—Reading—Paddington*) and realized that in five hours he might have been restored to the back sitting-room, where his father smoked in his shirt sleeves and Gwen hammered the piano; again, when he stood watching the men cast off, breaking the last link with his only world; it had been somewhere in his mind all this time, colouring even the moments when he was gay or frightened: the aching sense of exile, the almost intolerable weight of loneliness. Trained to recognize values, he knew what this journey meant for him, with not a penny to come out of his own pocket; Oxford was all right, but now at last he was seeing something; he welcomed the new companionship of men who had lived different

lives from his, whose mind and humour were different from his own—a closer, more equal companionship than any which Oxford had given him. Yet it weighed down upon the resilience of his spirits, the heavy burden of nostalgia. In this undreamed-of world, featureless and unbounded, it clutched him more fiercely. He was seldom warm, never completely sheltered, and his body's discomfort seemed to infect the inmost kernel of his mind. He hated the silence, and the unbroken landscape which stretched all day before him, drew away his spirit, made his heart strain out to reach the receding border of its measureless desolation; to find, if it could overtake the fleeting horizon, some solid resting-place, were it only a wall or a chimney, were it only a solitary tree. At night, wriggling for comfort in his sleeping-bag, thankful to have the emptiness shut out by darkness and a strip of canvas, he would recreate, in a mind unused to such exertion, the beloved objects of familiarity. He would pray, then, that he might one day pass again through the gaudy foyer of the Regal for an hour's pictures; he would long, with an almost physical longing, for one evening at the Railway Club, for half an hour at Bugler's Café with Susan or Katherine, with any one of half-a-dozen girls who dressed smart and talked easy and didn't spare the scent bottle. He woke, often in the cold hours before the light had broken, straining his ears, forcing them if they would but outrun distance to catch the rumble of an early tramcar swinging round into the Seven Sisters Road. There was nothing of it left, none of the things he was used to. His very clothes, odd and still uncomfortable, were new; except the sweater, and that he had bought at Oxford. His hands smelt of soil and fish, with not a whiff of London or of Lifebuoy. He was a new person altogether,

skin-hardened and bearded. Only his spirit, unready for these gallant trappings, smaller than it had ever been, crept away to hide itself in a picture-house of elusive memories.

"Can you keep going another half-hour?" Andrew asked.

"Oh yes, easily."

And at the next bend Guller asked:

"Who goes on the raft next? You do, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Can I come with you?"

"Well, it should be Matt. And with your hands in that state you'd do better to stick to paddling. It's the lesser evil."

"Matt wants to, I suppose?"

"Well, yes, he likes to have his turn. Why?"

"Oh—just—I like being with you."

Andrew moved to sit sideways and turned his head. He could paddle nearly as well in that position, steering almost by second-nature.

"I'm afraid you're homesick," he said.

Guller was startled. That was a thing kids suffered from, so he'd read, and he was going on for twenty-five. But he said:

"Well, I suppose I am."

"I know."

"You ever been like that?"

"Yes. I am now. Well, not quite the same. Oh, yes, I used to be. Even when I'd done a lot of travelling. Worcester—it grows on you frightfully if you've been brought up there. Perhaps not as badly as London—I can't say. (Steady! you're pulling me round.) But I know how it is."

"But you don't still think about it?"

"Worcester? No, no place in particular. Kaustborg if anywhere."

"Kaustborg?"

"Well, it's the last place where we were really comfortable, wasn't it? But perhaps it's just a general longing to get outside this soul-souring desert." He paddled another twenty strokes and went on: "But it's worse for you. I'm after something. You don't know, you can't know how fond I am of that little man. You'll understand a bit when we find him, if we do. That keeps me going."

"You'd be fed-up, else?"

"Yes. I'm like you, Guller, I'm lonely. I've had a hell of a knock. Still, that's my trouble."

But that, for Guller, was some comfort. You could not share your own loneliness, it belonged to you like a physical scar, like the soreness of blisters pressed at every stroke against the hardness of the paddle. Yet somehow there was solace in finding another man lonely. They paddled on strongly, instinctively seeking to regain the ground lost while they were talking. In twenty minutes now, less perhaps, they would come upon Matt and Sasiliv waiting. The river turned again, a horseshoe bend which brought them to face the region they had traversed. But nothing, save their pale shadows on the water, would have told them. Like distance, direction itself was lost, was meaningless, in that bleak infinity. No birds passed over the tundra. There was no sound but the creak of the shutava, the plop of the two paddles entering the water, the whisper of the dripping blades as they were lifted.

¶"It doesn't change much," Keel said.

Keel and Paillard trudged together. Matt was suffering from rheumatism in the jaw. It stopped him

arguing, but he had taken to humming now; always the same tune, *John Brown's Body*, hummed ponderously and with a certain provoking cheerfulness. So Keel preferred to be with Guller, who was at least silent and sometimes humorous, or with Paillard, who could talk if you encouraged him on any subject with an eagerness which lifted your mind from the surrounding wilderness.

"It doesn't change much," he said.

Paillard raised his black eyebrows.

"Doesn't change? It changes all the time. Every ten minutes it changes. The soil is different here—there's some grass, see? not much—it has only a few inches of soil in which to implant itself. The ice, you see, quite close. Farther south we shall find better grass, more of it. And look over there. A week ago—you remember?—no birds at all. Why? I don't know. I shall presently form a hypothesis. But now, many birds. And you have not seen those before. No, surely."

Keel sighed.

"One bird to me is the same as another."

"Ah, but no! You must see the differentiation. Yesterday it was the common scoter—thousands, everywhere, nothing else. But those—look! they're lower now—you know what they are? Oh my hat! have you read no study-books? The phalarope, quite usual, in England also, sometimes."

"Very interesting!" Keel said. "Mais plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. Are they edible, by the way?"

Paillard ignored him.

"Look!" he said.

It was a flight of long-necked, white birds, to which he pointed now. They came from the north-east, perhaps half a thousand of them, and they flew south on

a sweeping course, bunched in a spear-head. As they came nearer the leader curved downwards, tilting his wings steeply to slip on the wind's side; and having dropped thus a hundred feet he turned his course a little with one lithe movement of his body, and flew on, low above the ground, with a steady, easy motion. Like a cavalry platoon the flight fell into line behind him, so that a single thread was drawn from the tumbled pillow and strung out till it reached half across the empty sky. They flew south, crying gently and hoarsely as if they found the leader's pace too strong. Behind them there was nothing but the grey distant sky, beneath, only the brown tundra, fading into a grey horizon.

"You see!" Paillard whispered, "that was correctly done. All the painters in the world would have put in a tree or a windmill."

"But it's gone," Keel said.

While he stumbled over the pot-holed ground, made formidable by the weight of his load and his feet's soreness, his eyes were turned south to watch the specks dissolving in the far sky. And when the last had disappeared his mind still pursued them, wondering if even they could escape. He thought: 'They will rise higher and fly on faster than the swiftest expresses. They will fly without stopping, and perhaps in five days they will pass over the Stavonoi mountains.' He tried to see again their flight across the now empty sky, to grasp in a single sweep of his imagination the extent of a hundred hours, with the birds flying faster and faster. But distance yielded to no such trickery. In the tent at night he could span the vast spaces upon the maps, stretching thumb from little finger; but here, in the pitiless daylight, distance had become personified in the unchanging tundra, and in each succeeding day, days

which stretched out into interminable evenings, it fortified itself, boasted its mastery more loudly. His birth into this unpeopled world was almost forgotten. Oldersen's voice calling Good Luck from the darkness, the ship's lights disappearing, the boat's crazy skirmish amid the hustling driftwood, these had faded together into a single vision too faint and too fantastic to be reality; while already the years behind were a pleasant, leisurely story, read perhaps on a long railway journey, the adventures of another personality. In front and behind there was no boundary to this desert, only increasing weariness and distance unchallenged by measure or by movement.

"They've gone," he said, "and now there's nothing but emptiness."

Paillard caught him by the arm.

"Careful! you will fall into one of these ditches."

"Nothing but emptiness!" Keel repeated.

"It's peaceful," Paillard admitted. "It calms the mind."

"Tell me," Keel asked, "why did you come on this trip? Just to calm the mind?"

Paillard pursed his lips and his eyes twinkled like those of an elderly man being saucy with nice maidens. He was not in the least affronted by Keel's sour temper, was rather flattered by his careless rudeness; he felt himself closer to that permanent enigma, the Anglo-Saxon, than he had ever been before. But as he spoke he recovered his seriousness.

"I was invited," he replied. "I was invited by the man I admire most of all men in the world. There is, of course, the technical interest, the scientific observations. But that is nothing. For interest, the people of my country do not have to go so far. We apply the

intelligence to what is around us, that is enough for the more-part. No, it is Andrew. He carries—I can't say—the force, enterprise, the will. He commands affection. I met him just once, at Bordeaux, where he comes to lecture to the students. Of course there's a fuss, there's the legend of a great traveller, a great scholar, a hero of the war. But that, what would one believe? The newspapers, they must always make a big talk of something. But I attend to the lecture, and he is not what I have thought. Not so big, like the English game-shooter, and not so cold like the savant, the littérateur, the Dean Inge, you see? And he speaks very well, very easily, the French of Tours. Then afterwards I was invited to meet him. Oh no, no, I am not an important Bordelais, only I have written books on tropic-diseases, and we may have experience in common, perhaps. It is a courtesy of the Doyen, who is related to me by marriage. Well, there, you see, in a corner of the drawing-room, the English lecturer. And for me, then, there is no one else in the room, no one else in all the world. We speak together, and he said: 'You must come on a journey with me sometimes.' Just like that. And of course I thought that he go back and forget all about. But no, he has remembered. I get a letter one day, and—I cannot describe. I feel that every fortune has happened to me."

Burdened as he was, Paillard stooped to uproot a minute piece of moss and dropped it into the little canister slung from his belt.

"And he is never married. The women of your country, of what sort can they be?"

Keel had no answer. "We'd better hurry," he said, "we're miles behind. Isn't your billy full yet?"

The light, indeed, was at last failing, and there was

no sign of the party ahead. The shadows of the two men were lengthening upon the sickly verdure, and this was the only positive sign of evening. For some time the sky had been empty of birds, and against the silence that reigned all day there could be no increase of quietness, no drama in the day's ending. Only the light was subdued, the still monotone grew paler, the lifeless tundra sank into darkness as a world in its final æon freezes into sterility.

They must hurry, for it would soon be hard to find the little sticks that Sasiliv had planted to guide them. But it was hard to alter the pace at which they had slipped and plodded over the slime for so many hours, even with hunger to spur them. Keel had whistled in the morning, but he was quiet now, his brain dulled, his eyes restlessly searching for something in the distance, a flash of white or a spark of flame, which would mark the night's encampment. There was no need for him to look out for the sticks; Paillard, good fellow that he was, always picked them up. Paillard had a compass on his wrist and with him you need not worry about losing the way. Paillard was a tower of strength, and lowly, so that you need not fear that he would suspect your courage.

There was relief, a kind of weary relief, in seeing the drab colours fade from the tundra, earth without form and void, unreal and desolate. At least, when they caught up, there would be one tent pitched, and Sasiliv would have got a fire going with the pitiful twigs he had collected on his way. There, if the tent was not too much shaken by the wind, you might forget that the men beside you were the only souls living on this aborted planet. But the night would break again into cold, unbounded morning. There was no purpose in

this journey, they travelled without progress, the lighted objective which he saw now—a flicker that might be twenty miles away—was nothing but a stake-mark, a point at which the clock's hand must pause in every revolution.

In actuality it was another forty minutes before they came within hailing distance and heard Matt shout: "Here come the twin tortoises! What happened? Did you go back to the ship for a handkerchief?"

Unloading himself at the door of the tent, Paillard asked: "Did you see that flight of geese? Magnificent!"

"Yes, but they were too far off. Not worth a cartridge."

¶ Seventy-four years old, Artunka doubted if he would see another summer, but did not care much. He was too lame, now, to take part in the goose-driving, and winter was more natural to him. The world he belonged to was stiff, white and brittle, and when the Lukanot was frozen there was always a chance of news coming, even news personified in a stranger; for a bold trader without proper connexions, outbidden at Pestosk, would sometimes force his way to Esstoye and make his own bargains on the spot. Then there would be alcohol to last a month or more. Even without such excitement, the winter was better for an old man. If his joints were troublesome, Artunka could stay by the fire, which his younger wife kept going night and day. There was hardly any light in the yurta, so the short hours of daytime floated by without much intrusion upon his thoughts, which were of events far distant, larger and braver in their remoteness. There was little enough, then, between his sleeping and his waking hours. He ate when he wanted to, from the bowl of stroganina

which Ksosa had always ready for him. The long darkness, crossed by narrow strips of twilight, went easily through his consciousness, leaving his mind unchanged and his body little altered. In the summer he would rise, drowsy and rather tired, to stand at the doorway and watch the village pass with eyes a little dazzled by the broad light, smiling sometimes and nodding to a cousin of his own generation. But to winter he looked forward as a weary man to his bed.

The days were shortening now, and the geese had begun to fly south. Artunka waited, with some impatience, for the snow, and at first paid little attention, in a country always tingling with rumour, to the sensational story that strangers had been seen, approaching from the north. That kind of gossip had excited Esstoye from the earliest years he remembered. But when the rumour again reached him, coming from a new source, he ordered Ksosa to make diligent inquiries on her own account. "You must make it clear," he told her, "that only you are curious—that I have no interest in such matters."

The miracle occurred, and he, alone in that community of twenty chimneys, met it with dignity and self-possession. Miracles were a commonplace in Esstoye; did not Saint Gouder himself pass through the village one night in every year, mounted upon a huge white reindeer, in the midst of his own holy purga, his long beard brushing against the yurtas as the wind swept him forward? but this was a manifestation more startling, more actual, more contrary to the accepted knowledge of the way in which things happened in the world. It was beyond all imagination, the happening of a lifetime, the greatest event since the world had begun. From the north, out of nowhere: six of them,

five Russians with a Yakut to guide them, with pale eyes and beards closely cut; weirdly clothed; with the speech of unknown animals and queer, wild laughter; with trading-boxes that would load a hundred sleds and take a thousand dogs to pull them, with magic instruments that departed saints had made beyond the white sea-mountains, carrying-stoves where a fire as powerful as the sun went on burning for ever, boxes in which live spirits were kept to wriggle and mutter and tell fortunes. . . .

But Artunka, who had seen single traders often—three of them he could remember since he had been starotsa—welcomed them as if he were accustomed to such visits; inquired of the guide what he might do for them: and placed two ancient yurtas, which his sons could make habitable, at their disposal. The village would do nothing but stand gaping round the Niutchas in a closing circle, pestering the guide—those who had a few words of Yakut—with interminable questions. Artunka, having made it clear that his own house was open to them when they desired to partake of his hospitality, made no attempt to approach their quarters. He believed—it was a proudly-guarded tradition in his family—that he had Russian blood in his own veins, acquired in an epoch before history started; he was, at any rate, starotsa, and not in the least inquisitive like the common herd. But Ksosa had private instructions to learn everything she could.

The Russians had no alcohol—so they said—but everyone was sure they had at least a vedro somewhere among all those possessions. It was as well perhaps, Artunka thought. He himself had been so long now without that consolation that he did not powerfully desire it; and the village was better without that further

encumbrance, when it should be collecting driftwood and fish for the dogs enough to last through the winter. At least the Russians had tea, tobacco, coloured stuffs for the womenfolk, and curiosities of all sorts in profusion. Enough to pay for what they wanted, and their demands were not trivial: nartas and dog teams with kayurs, changing-dogs and the necessary dog-fish to get them as far as Lust directly the Lukanot was hard enough; besides provisions for themselves, quantities of fish and all the goose-meat that could be scraped together. Lust? There was sufficient evidence that it existed; indeed, one of Artunka's sons had boasted of going there, a dozen winters back; but the longest journey undertaken as a rule was only to Petepek, an outpost deer-station of the Yukagirs. Lust! it was a ridiculous demand! Still, if they could afford to pay. . . .

At any rate they should have enough dogs to start the journey, if the number could possibly be spared for so long; everyone was prepared to undergo some hardship with the compensation of ample sugar and tobacco; and Artunka, though the Russians were polite and friendly, would be glad to see the last of them. He wanted his people to settle down again. He was too old for so much excitement, and already he had enough to make rousing talk for the rest of his days. (What a business! It was as if Esstoye had been suddenly lifted up by a mighty wind and carried away a million kess to the south, where they said that Russia was, with its twice a hundred chimneys.) Yes, the sooner they were gone now, the better, and if it was dogs they wanted they should have them, and kayurs too, his own sons among them. After all, was not Esstoye noted throughout the inhabited world for its dogs, their strength, their swiftness and endurance? Artunka

looked every day at the sun, and rejoiced to see the curtailment of its orbit. He knew, certainly, that the snow was coming, that the summer which had started early—an omen for miraculous happenings—would likewise die before its time. What talk there would be, this winter in the smoke-filled yurtas! He almost wished, now, that his days could be extended somewhat that he might prolong the pleasure of it. But chiefly he was weary, with his age and the world turning all upside-down around him. He waited with renewed eagerness, with growing impatience, for the snow and the hard stillness of winter.

¶ With no less impatience Andrew waited. There was the question, among others, of supplies. Sasiliv, better treated than he had ever been in all his wanderings, was cunning in his stewardship and would part with not one brick of tea without getting its full value in supply or service; but the stores of food, oil and barterage had to last at least as far as Os-Yefta, where traders might be found who would accept paper, and it was disheartening to see supplies falling under the insistent demand of six stomachs, while no progress was being made. Bad enough to wait at Kaustborg, where at least there were distractions. But here, when once the yurtas were in order, there was nothing to do that would satisfy his restlessness. From curiosity he learnt a little of Esstoye's language, and was able to trace, here and there, a vein of etymology; but a hundred miles on, the knowledge would be useless, and it was a dialect without ornament or beauty. On the writing pad he had brought with him he wrote a chapter of his book, but without the means for adequate quotation he made poor work of it. Matt's energy found some outlet in tracking and shooting;

Paillard was after specimens all day, often accompanied by Keel, who mournfully read passages from the life of Earl FitzStanhope and continually jeered at him; while Guller, the most useful with his fingers, spent much of his time with the kayurs and became knowledgeable about the construction of the narta. With the help of Sasiliv, Andrew did most of the cooking, and he alone strove to keep their cramped dwelling in some order. A man less quick in his movements would have found his whole time taken up by the task; but to one who had spent a great part of his life in twisting simple comfort from the cramped opportunities of cabins in river steamers, of caravans and Ford trucks and Chinese railway carriages, the creation of tidiness came easily. He sat for hours with Artunka, who spoke in Yakut with sufficient fluency, and plied him for information about the country to the south and east. But Artunka knew little. If anything were known about such distant parts, he said, they would know it at Lust; yes, one of his sons had been to Lust—or so he said, but Artunka didn't believe the boy. For himself, he had no wish to be concerned with such distant places, it was sufficient for him to be honoured with the conversation of the prince of Niutchas who now sat before him. . . . And still the snow did not come. The days grew shorter, and at night the air was very cold. But the wind still blew from the warmer quarter, and the sun pale in its dying sickness, was yet strong enough to soften the marshes and loose the water-holes that had brittled overnight. The summer held, and hundreds of miles to the south and east Franz was dying; alive but dying, Andrew knew that now, read it in the mirror of subtle, quickened consciousness which united remote spirits in this wide country. The urgency which, on the *Oenexia*, had

driven his thoughts ahead of the stumbling vessel, had been redoubled as the train ran north from Kaustborg. He knew now—he had known as they dragged over the grey Arctic sea, that he had chosen a purpose safer and smaller than the one of his strongest willing. The choice was right, by all he knew of values. Only, if the present object failed—and it felt like failure—he had lost a stake too large for losing. Time wasted, time that would never be recaptured, time which had to be seized by trespass from the ownership of sleep—that was sufficient price for failure. But now, he had cut away part of himself to make this journey. He had sacrificed himself and he believed—as in the hours of darkness he saw her face again, her face at the station, appealing to him—that he had sacrificed her also. It was intolerable to lose them both. Franz he must find, and endure for ever that vision of Greta, die with it, if only death would drive it away. . . . But he woke each morning to see clean weather, to see Sasiliv spit and shrug his shoulders. Prayer and fury were alike unavailing. He was trapped there, in that cartoon of a peasant village, while the tundra slipped idly through its cheerless autumn.

¶Even Keel showed some excitement when at last the Lukanot froze. He had become detached, mournfully jovial, given at times to an outpouring of acid comment on Esstoye and its people, on his companions, on every branch of human enterprise, that flowed like the drops from a worn washer until Matt forcibly stopped him. For a few days Keel had found Esstoye interesting. It was different from any place he had seen or imagined, it was at least a punctuation mark in the wilderness over which they journeyed. But the people, amusing

as they looked, could not talk to him nor he to them; every yurta was like its neighbour, inside and out; and the flow of life was that of peasant existence elsewhere, ceaselessly active yet never presenting the aspect of brisk activity. Esstoye was tiny, it was related only to itself, the same things happened every day. It was devoid of live colour, and across its more intimate odour of decaying fish and the dung of dogs there blew the scent of the marshes, chill, brackish, like the flavour of water in which acorns have rotted. But with the coming of winter, which in its last assault was swift and conclusive, the odour of swamp and decayed vegetation was cut off as if by the stroke of a sword swung backhand from the shoulder, and perceptibly, the movement of the village quickened. The dogs were excited, and their howls filled the air all day. The men re-dug their ditches so that the snow, when it melted, would run away from the doors of their yurtas, and the women patched any neglected hole that would admit the wind's finger when the purga swept down upon them. Parties hastened to collect the driftwood which still lay piled on the river banks, and the smallest children were set to work on the runners of the sleds. The locus of Esstoye, a needle's prick on the tundra, was unaltered; but with the sleds running out in every direction, with the curious sharpening of sound which made the voices of the kayurs sound back to the village from a great distance, Esstoye's remoteness seemed to be diminished. There was, in its brisker life, a suggestion of traffic with the world outside. Its peasant quietude had broken. The season which froze the earth and laid over it a carpet of uniform whiteness, which on each succeeding day reduced the hours of daylight, seemed by its threat and challenge to have banished the apathy of autumn, by its hard

stillness to have provoked activity. In a country of winter the sense of the seasons was reversed; and though, in a few months, Artunka's wives would look wistfully to see the sun mount higher, they felt the life flow back to them now, which had ebbed with the unsealing of the rivers.

The snow was actually falling when the caravan departed, and a wind from the south-east blew the snow in the men's faces. Sasiliv advised further delay; it would be unpleasant going, and the kayurs feared that the fresh surface-snow would freeze in lumps on the runners and clog them. But Andrew would have no more delay, and his party was solidly behind him. Very well then, they could make a start, but it might prove a false one. The excitement in the village was catastrophic. Never had such a magnificent train been witnessed, never so many dogs paraded together. The dogs' enthusiasm was demoniac, and their owners, grouped each household round its own animals, were hard put to soothe them with endearing conversation. The train stretched almost to the length of the settlement, one narta after another piled high with luggage —too high, Artunka said, for the dogs' endurance in such a headwind. The kayurs, muffled to the eyes, kept up a running fire of exhortation, imploring the beasts to be still, to be patient, to trust them, while the last of the sleds was loaded and the balance brought to delicate adjustment. Andrew moved up and down the line, gravely preoccupied, and from time to time, as he passed Artunka's house, Artunka kissed him. The rest, save Guller who helped with the loading, were in their places, and Keel, now obstinately bored, with difficulty held Earl FitzStanhope between his furred fingers. The breath of men and dogs rose in a cloud,

which the gusty wind mingled with the tumbling snow-flakes. Already the train, dogs, men and nartas, was white-blanketed, and the kayurs shook their bodies and stamped and swung their arms only to be whitened again as soon as they stopped moving. Matt hoarsely grumbled. Why the delay—surely everything was loaded? But at last the word was passed up, in a cry that the kayurs echoed in chorus, and the leader, gathering the slack of his reins with a deft movement of his wrist, gave the shout of '*Poza-poza.*' As if whipped across the flanks the leading team strained forward, achieved momentum, and tore away, cracking the stiff air with their frantic aboyment. The rest followed hard in their train, furiously hunting. Something like a cheer rose from the village to mingle with the shrill cries of the kayurs, and there was a breath of sadness in it, for the greatest epoch in Esstoye's history was ended. When Paillard looked round, five minutes later, Esstoye had vanished in the driving snow.

¶ Paillard alone, in the first three days of dog-running, preserved wholly his normal mentality. His swift, analytical intelligence was like a mettlesome trotter which he drove on a tight rein. Deprived of his spectacles, which frosted over so rapidly that they would only blind him, he managed none the less to see what trivial landmarks they were passing, to note where the brush was sturdy enough to stand up through the snow, to study the cries and motions of the kayurs. Like the others, he suffered; but detached, he observed his own sensations and recorded them minutely in his careful memory. This was, for him, the most interesting part of the journey. In ornithology he was only an amateur, and physical geography he studied simply because it

was a branch of learning unnatural to him. But here he carried in his own person an instrument for physiological exploration. As the temperature fell, as first his toes and then his whole legs froze gradually to insensibility, as his heart responded to the quick air driven painfully by the dogs' pace into his lungs, he nicely remarked these phenomena, and felt that the time he had given to this undertaking had by no means been sacrificed in vain. Squatting, so bewrapped in fur that only his blinking eyes showed, curiously young without their normal decoration, his head turning slowly like that of a lazy heron, he looked a picture of inert wretchedness. But he, alone of the Europeans, commanded his faculties fully because they were fully occupied. He was not excited, for he was too busy observing Andrew's excitement. The bitter cold and the recurring barrage of snowflakes stung him less sharply than they stung his companions, for his eye was always on the thermometer buttoned to the sleeve of his Chukchi smock and he was for ever surprised that his sensations were not more painful. Where others set teeth upon their frozen lips, hardly able to restrain the actual tears which would have blinded their eyes, he endured the torment with apparent indifference: not, like Matt and Guller, with a dogged stoicism, not like Andrew with the fortitude of determination, nor with Keel's desperate self-mastery; but with a mind for ever alert to more significant realities.

They were moving; at last perceptibly moving. True, there was bare change in the country over which they passed; lean country, covered uniformly with the piled snow. The snow had filled every shallow depression in the surface of the plain, had overlaid the projecting brushwood, had fallen evenly on the frozen water-tracts, spreading across the low banks, obliterating

every line of sharpness that would scar the landscape's homogeneity: so that the territory through which the Lukanot twisted, a vastness defined only by the reach of the grey-white sky, was like a countryside despoiled and devastated by long and bitter warfare; the last saps and ramparts rolled smooth by the engines of the conquering army, white-varnished to eternal stillness; and like the dust that follows an advancing column, the white snow-spume drifted always across the sleeping surface. But they moved: no longer with the tedious motion of a steamship, no longer in shutavas that crept like insects along the interminable river banks, but swift and noisily, with the surface snow flying out from the driving runners, the dogs charging forward as if they saw the rim of the white world and had heart to overrun it. You need not look, eyes stung by cold and confused with flying snow, to see the desolate country passing; you felt the motion from the hard snow running beneath the narta, the tilt as the kayur leant his body to swing it when the course turned sharply, the exhilarating lift, like the powerful heave of a chaser's saddle, when at the cry of '*Norakh-norakh*' the dogs shot up the low bank to cut a marked corner and sweep down again two miles away, to the river's track. That uncanny motion, related by no sensation to the bounding progress of the team steaming and barking before you, so filled your consciousness that to stop was trying to your nerves, and in sleep you still felt it, sleep's own motion quickened to livelier sensibility. In truth, the pace was not so rapid; but the dogs ran as if pursued by witches, and the closeness of the white ground increased the illusion of breathless speed. You saw, when you looked forward, the team ahead flying full gallop to escape your own; when the snow fell so thickly that the rump of

your leading dog was hardly visible, you felt that your team was yet in sight of its quarry, that the fury of the hunt never slackened. In this empyrean motion, release from long captivity, they found an inspiration to fortitude through the days when their bodies were yet unaccustomed to cold so intense and piercing; when, crouched in their furs, they seemed to be steeped in a bath of coldness; when arms, legs and thighs felt the numb pain of amputation; when their eyes smarted, their ears ached with the wind's drubbing, their beards, matted heavily with frozen moisture, dragged from their chapped and blistered skin. And in time, before endurance had been beaten, their bodies hardened. Their skin, at first flayed by the razor of icy wind, grew tougher to resist it. They learned to drop off the sleds while their legs were still under command, to run a hundred yards beside the dogs, and thus at frequent stages to give fresh impetus to the blood's circulation. Their eyes became more used to meeting the frozen air, they grew bolder to throw furs aside and depend for warmth on the swing of arms against chest and shoulders. From a condition of silent, dazed submission they gradually emerged as living beings, re-formed for existing, actively if yet wretchedly, in a country not fashioned for their kind.

The teams were driven to the limit of their strength throughout the hours of daylight, with only the shortest pauses for recovery, when both dogs and men were refreshed with stroganina. In the daytime there were no regular meals; the halts were not long enough to give time for cooking. At night the kayurs made fires and cooked a horrid broth from the frozen chir and muksun; that, with tea, was the staple diet of the journey, relieved by sparing portions of tinned food. The

broth, taken almost on the very boil, was comforting. Their resting-place was always a povarnia, for the kayurs managed their teams with such precision that this shelter was invariably reached at nightfall. To men who had sat stiff all day, their brains numbed to vacancy, it was full pleasure to stand and stamp while the fire caught and blazed to fierce heat; to feel, after a minute's torture, the comfort of warm blood flowing again through their crying veins; to melt the frozen moisture in hair and beard, to throw off their outer clothes, to relieve themselves, to light their pipes and talk together, slowly, foolishly, for the mere satisfaction of hearing each other's voices. They slept, the travellers with their drivers, piled together, as needs they must if so large a party were to share the limited accommodation of the povarnia; the dogs close by; and woke in the morning half suffocated but reasonably warm. They grew used to the fœtid odour, compound of fish and fur, the bodies of dogs and men, the rank, salt breath of the kayurs; for at that time warmth was everything. Paillard, waking at his regular hour of five to find Matt's legs across his belly and Sasiliv breathing into his face, would wonder, as he turned his head distastefully, how life would present itself to a man who lived always in that aroma. But the rest were content with the experience of being warm. They lived to travel, and to exist. They lived in the present, they had ceased to examine or to wonder, they looked forward only to nightfall, when a fire would heat them and a wall shelter them from the unrelenting wind.

But their progress became visible. The ground, surely though imperceptibly, was rising; Paillard's thermometer showed a rise in the mean temperature; the country became more broken, the surface of snow less even. Now the brush began to penetrate; brown

shrubs appeared like frozen skeletons above the snow, and at last, paltry trees. They saw, one midday, the low line of the Bessel hills on the horizon, and at evening, sweeping widely, passed through the Wolf Gap. Beyond, the snow was deeper, more steeply rifted; the drifts rose to the height of little hills, which lay like swaddled corpses across the line of their advance; the going was harder there, but the wind less keenly edged. A day farther, the trees rose to a bolder height, more surely rooted beneath the snow lapping their trunks. The route turned southerly, rising, the trees gathered together, the track fell sharply to its former level, and as the teams rushed furiously along the river's course, the forest of Shtchivra closed about them. It was a new monotony, the trees passing in lifeless procession all through the day, their bare, gaunt trunks smudged with the everlasting snow; a new kind of prison, where, however far or fast they drove, the walls continued in semblance of a nightmare highway; but the movement seemed to be faster, the dogs more tireless, the kayurs more demoniac in their exhortation. Here the wind was foiled by the regiment of tree-trunks. The snowfall had stopped, the air was drier and more grateful. Winter, shut within harder boundaries, lost some of its stature and its menace. There was more excitement in this narrower country, if only the excitement of speed, of the dogs' splendid gallop, the crackle of sound in the still, hard air. In the hour when the light abruptly faded the forest was eerie and sullen; it seemed then to hold in a tighter grasp the prisoners who had not escaped its reaches in the day's hard driving. But it was better in the first daylight to see the Shtchivra, the trees gathered close in a grim circle, than a mastless ocean of snow. There were marks of reasoned move-

ment here; slashed trunks, a piece of sawn wood amid a tumbled heap of stones, once a rotting snowboot of which the owner lay perhaps buried in the sunk and frozen snow of another winter. Then there were fresh sled-tracks and the lately frozen excrement of dogs. The kayurs shouted to one another, the foremost sending back the news; the dogs caught their excitement and ran the faster. The travellers rose before daybreak next morning. Across broken snow, on a rising incline, the dogs worked manfully, and when the track bore down again they reached their highest speed. There were fewer halts that day. And on the next, with a roar and flourish, they drove into the township of Lust.

The purga which all the wiseacres of Lust had predicted did not occur; and they reached Os-Yefta, travelling night and day in covered deer-sleds, in excellent time. There Sasiliv, still friendly, left them. It was not his country, he said, and he would go no farther south. Lust had appealed to him; he might go back there, perhaps take a wife and settle down for a time, for he could make his living as trapper, fisherman or hunter in any kind of district; but in time he would wander again, westward he thought, wherever dogs would take him. "And yet, I shall not be so lucky again," he said. "Never before in all my travelling have I been with light-eyed men as an equal. And it will not happen again."

There was news at Os-Yefta. It came from as far south as Gostokeff, where one Cohda had lately journeyed to sell reindeer. At Gostokeff, he said, a place where they had no such excitements as Niutchas arriving in whole battalions from the north, no one could talk of anything but the extraordinary traveller who had passed through, going east towards the Khanina, with five sleds to contain himself and his guide and provisions;

he had bought nothing save food and the necessities of travel, for which he had paid in tea; and gratuitously he had left four books behind him, which the priest had taken and bound tightly between two pieces of sledge-timber to be kept as a memorial. A small man, they said, small in his upstanding and large in his down-sitting. Some supposed he was a priest, but there was nothing to show; and though by appearance he was Niutcha he spoke no kind of Russian that the priest of Gostokeff—a man of infinite learning—could understand. His courier, a Kazak sufficiently fluent in Yakut, was reserved, as such foreigners usually are; but had said, and vehemently maintained, that his employer came from a country beyond Russia itself. This laughable theory had served to increase interest in the stranger among those—women and the rest—who were sufficiently gullible to listen to such fairy tales.

So much was dragged from Cohda, an indefatigable tautologist, in a dozen conversations. He appeared to know something more, but that he would not tell them. His position was that of a desert explorer who has worked heroically to bring back a drum of water for companions dying of thirst, and who finds that in his absence a river has gushed up through the arid soil. He did not really like these Niutchas. "Gostokeff is a great place," he told them, with a touch of globe-trotter's pride. "Ten times as big as Os-Yefta, perhaps as big as Oleminsk, and that Moscow they talk of. You hear lots of things when you travel to Gostokeff. They say, there, that there's a new Emperor, Vladimir Ulianoff."

They received the news of the foreigner and his five sleds with varying enthusiasm. Keel was the least moved. He thought Cohda's story too flimsy to be worth attention; and in any case, he had lost all interest

in Franz Grundmann. They'd had a run—what a run! —for Matt's money; they were alive, by some miracle; that, surely, was enough. But Andrew was oddly stirred. "That is Franz, I feel quite certain," he said simply, and went back to the yurta they had hired, to go over the map again with Paillard.

Paillard did his best to respond. But he had wondered, from the start, whether the expedition was a practical affair at all; Englishmen had a streak of dementia, even the most sophisticated; and now that his imagined picture of the country had been replaced by the devastating reality, he believed that it was like dragging the Gironde for last week's suicide and hoping to find him in good health. Besides, he was fatigued. The days of exposure had taken more out of him than he had suspected at the time; and now, when the interest of it was behind, he was conscious of a relaxed sensation, of powerful lethargy. They were all affected in some degree; even Matt, whose eyes had suffered and now dripped tears all day, obstinately resisting treatment and giving him a very woe-begone appearance. In that frozen village they were like men breathing for the first time the stupefying air of an equatorial summer. They had grown, with the thickening of their beards, to a curious senility. Their voices were lower. They were affectionate, at times displaying their affection with sentimental gestures. They looked about them with the sharp, detached glances of old men convalescing after months of illness, no longer able fully to grasp the surrounding movement, a little childish and a little supercilious, desperately tired.

Except Andrew: he was brusquer than he had been at Vadsö, more alert in his movements, less ready to talk when speech was not strictly necessary. He behaved

as one who had rehearsed each incident in the journey, not once but often. He had seemed always to know which way the country would lie, a hundred versts ahead; to realize the limits of sledge-dogs' endurance, to know the respective minima of rations for kayur and rider, to understand the heating of a povarnia and the harnessing of reindeer. He trimmed his party with laconic comments: 'Keel, you're wearing too much, you'll be warmer without that cape.' 'Hi! Paillard, get off and run a bit, you'll get stiff.' That was the only palpable gesture of his captaincy. His quietness remained. His eagerness showed only in trifling actions: his upward glance to judge how long the light would last; his constant scrutiny of the dwindling stores; the times when, in the midst of another topic, he would say, 'Franz never could bear fish' . . . 'Franz's birthday next week.' But Matt, at least, discerned the urgency of spirit which drove him like the rowel of a spur, which blazed beneath his hardening normality.

"I believe we can cut across," Andrew said to Paillard.

They had reached the border of Vanderheit's map, and it was like finding the cypher after a week of labour on code manuscript. "I met Vanderheit once in Paris," Andrew said thoughtfully. "He knew his job, that fellow. He was like you, Alphonse, devilish thorough. But not so handsome."

Paillard had his slender middle finger on the map, which he considered with gentle enthusiasm. It was a new game to him, the reading of maps, and he began to like it.

"Tais-toi! Shut you up! No, it's not possible. Not possible at all. The snow will be in profound drifts. Prohibitive."

"But listen, Alphonse. If we go down to Gostokeff it's taking the two long sides of an immense isosceles

triangle. It'd take weeks. And apart from that, there's the chance of being stopped. That's what I'm frightened of. News travels just as fast both ways, you know—and look what a stir up there's been over Franz's caravan. They probably know all about it now in every hamlet within four hundred miles of Gostokeff. There must be a government agent of some sort at Gostokeff, if it's only a half-witted Tartar starotsa. . . . Matt! come here a moment, will you. Look. No, that way round. That's Gostokeff, where Alphonse's beautiful finger is. And that's where we are now. That's where we've got to get to, approx. That's the way Alphonse wants to go, and this is the way I do. Now which——"

"I'm sorry, but I can't see a dam thing with my eyes like this. It might be a plate of porridge you've got there, for all I can see of it."

"Well then, briefly, which way would you choose: the shorter, or the one twenty times as long?"

"Ah, but one moment——!" Paillard protested.

"Whose leg are you pulling?" Matt demanded. "Mine or the doc's?"

"But seriously," Paillard said, "your party's not fit, Andrew. They're not ready to attempt such a voyage. If we were all as fresh as you seem to be——"

"But seriously," Andrew rejoined, "we simply haven't the time to go wandering round by Gostokeff—apart from the risk. We've had nothing but amazing luck up till now, we're within striking distance, and—well, if you people prefer to go all the way round, do, but I——"

"Ah, but listen, my friend, one moment——!"

"What do you mean?" Matt asked. "D'you mean you think you can go over the Drost Pass all by yourself? While we're doing a joy-ride all round the country? D'you seriously mean to say you think it's

safe for a woolgathering old don to go trapesing about in the snow while——"

"The point is——" Andrew said.

"The point is——" Matt broke in.

"The point——" said Paillard.

Guller, in part, settled it. Since Lust, he had shown some awkwardness in the use of his right leg. Cramp, he said. Later, when Andrew had sharply inquired—"What's wrong with that leg, William?"—he had put the trouble down to a blister on the ball of his foot. "Your foot?" Matt asked. "Are you sure? Sitting on a blasted sled all day?" Evidently the blister was worse now; Guller hobbled with obvious pain, and that evening Paillard insisted on making an examination.

"Ce qu'il est bête!" Paillard said, making his report to Andrew. "Three toes, the little one and the two next. If he had shown me, ten days, five days ago, I could have had them all right. But now? Well, they can rest for a time, we shall see. Three days perhaps. But I fear they must go. The gangrene, it infects, you see, it spreads. Ah! stupid fellow! And me, I should have seen before—but he told me he had a little cramp. I have not used myself to such people."

Guller, then, had to go to Gostokeff; and obviously Paillard must go with him.

He said, very earnestly: "I think it means, Andrew, that we must go back now. Yes, give up the expedition. I must go to Gostokeff with this boy, and Matt needs my treatment, too. You can't go on without a doctor. I'm sorry, Andrew——"

"Why didn't he tell us?" Andrew said. "I'm sorry for him, poor old thing, he must have suffered, poor chap, but why didn't he tell us when you could have got it right? It's heartbreaking, just now. No,

Alphonse, I'm afraid we've got to split now. I hate leaving you out. . . ."

They arranged, then, that if possible Paillard should leave Guller at Gostokeff, the priest might prove to be a man of enough sense to look after him; and then do his best to get reindeer and post north, on the Ellensk route, with all the supplies he could get hold of. "You see here, Alphonse, where the route crosses the river twice in three versts? There, marked with a square. You'll see that peak—no, this one—dead north-west, and you should see the Bear Peak through that gap. If it's clear. But the double crossing ought to be sufficient indication—if you get a good guide he'll know it. There should be a building of sorts—Vanderheit's marked something but he doesn't make it clear what. Povarnia, probably. Or perhaps it's a timber-station—you see, it's on a relatively important route. You want to keep a note of your travelling time, and you can reckon distance that way—it'll serve as a rough check. Me? Oh, I'll find it, if Vanderheit doesn't let me down. The compass won't, it's a beauty. Well, that's the spot. Now as to time: to-day's date is——?"

Matt said his eyes were better. He had rubbed them with snow, he informed Andrew, on the hair-of-the-dog principle. "Seeing clearer every minute," he said. And, as Paillard had feared, he would not hear of Gostokeff. "If you think I like the stink of reindeer, Alphonse, you never made a greater mistake in all your vie. And my bottom's nearly worn through with those blasted sleds. I don't care if I never sit on one again. No, it's walking I want. I'm fed up with all this vulgar tourism, sitting all wrapped up in the deer-bus while Andrew makes his instructive comments on the scenery. If there's no place to walk to except——"

"Must you," asked Keel, "be so superlatively manly? We all know, by this time, that the sons of our far-flung empire, ever ready——"

"For God's sake, shut up!"

"Matt, hold your tongue."

"Well, this worm Keel——"

"Look in that case," Andrew said, "and see if there's a tin of brawn left. No, not you, Guller, you keep still! Is there? Good! We shall feast to-night. Keel, what do you think of doing? Alphonse's party or mine?"

"I'll think about it," Keel said. "I'll see what the weather's like."

He was cursing Guller for opening this abominably attractive way of escape. Os-Yefta, how he hated the place! A squalid hamlet, a mere huddle of shelters in the white desert, a mockery of communal society; where men and women lived only to labour for a livelihood too pitiful to contemplate, to freeze, to procreate and to die. Even Esstoye, with its primitive patriarchalism and the arresting physiognomy of its males, had been better than this tawdry encampment. And now, he only wanted to hear the sound of wheels on a hard road, to smell motor-oil, to see a woman of his own climate, to taste fresh meat, to be shaved and clothed like a European. The way Guller was going was the shortest to the satisfaction of that craving hunger. A few weeks, with little danger, with nothing but the cold and the monotony he had learnt to bear lightly: and then civilization. Prison, perhaps, but what was wrong with prison, if from a warm cell you could hear the distant rumble of traffic? Only—he didn't want to leave Matt. It was hard to know why, but he felt about Matt as (he supposed) a devoted woman feels about

her husband. Matt and Andrew together: he hated the idea of their being without him; of their knowing, both of them, and knowing it together, that they had more in them than he could muster, that their physical strength was greater, that they could travel farther than he. They might, he thought, be glad to be rid of him, able to move faster without him. And that was wrong; for now, when his body felt thin and tired, his stomach watery, he was conscious of dormant vitality which his will could yet evoke. If he wanted to, he could beat them. But was pride enough to justify such a gesture? . . . He would decide in the morning.

The feast, in fact, was a sober affair. Andrew, though he attempted cheerfulness, was distrait; and Matt restless, constantly leaving the group to do something he had thought of, to oil his Winchester, to patch a hole in Andrew's snow-boots, to tighten the lacing of the man-sled he had bought for the sortie. Above all, they were subject to a nervous sentimentality. They had been so much together, they belonged so closely to each other. A chapter was closing, a hard chapter, but they had shared it. It seemed unlikely that they would all sleep together again, in an atmosphere thick with fish, kerosene and human exhalation; Matt waking to curse at Guller for his snoring, Keel rolling over and being gently kicked back into his place. They had grown used to their communal life, and they were a little frightened to see the end approaching.

Andrew slept his usual six hours, and was out before dawn to make sure of the guide whose services he had secured for the first twenty versts. Paillard did fairly well, but the others slept badly. Matt, when he rose, found Keel outside the hut, with an empty pipe in his mouth, loading a light sled.

"Oh, you're coming with us?" he said.

"Why, yes. Alphonse can look after Guller, can't he? No point in me going."

The sun was only just above the edge when they started, and the village, unaware of what was happening, made no massed demonstration. The guide, a sullen fellow, struck off by himself, and the three men followed in single file; bundles of leather and wool and fur, ploughing through the snow and dragging their heavily-loaded sleds behind them. A light snow was falling. Paillard and Guller stood shivering side by side to see them off, Guller supported on Paillard's arm; Paillard mournful, Guller wretched to the point of tears. The track led upwards, and for more than twenty minutes they could see the four black smudges creeping across the snow.

¶ The four men trudged on all day in the same order; the guide some way ahead, Andrew behind him, Matt next. But on the following day, Keel was first after the guide, at less than a dozen paces. The invisible track zig-zagged, rising steadily. There was but half a foot of soft snow above the frozen crust, yet the going was more strenuous than it looked. The air, invigorating when the nostrils were accustomed to its sharpness, seemed to pass through the lungs too quickly. None of the men hummed or sang: and despite this precaution, this careful husbandry in breathing, they suffered presently from a stitch that could not be worked off. There was nothing to see but the man in front, dragging his sledge with the ponderous, regular leg-work of a carthorse on a stiff gradient; and the snow, dull white beneath a clouded sky, which spread smoothly upwards and at each accomplished terrace bent up again. Already they

were far beyond and above the belt of trees. If a man coughed, the next but one behind could hear him.

At midday the guide left them. A few gestures with the arm, up, down, swinging right and left, were his only parting directions. He went away on his sled, squatting on one leg and punting with the other to make progress on the insufficient gradient; and when he was a hundred yards away he stopped to shout back at them, pointing up at the heavy sky and comically shaking his fur-swaddled head. But they replied, in signs, that they did not understand him.

They did not wait to see him disappear, for the hours of daylight were still dangerously short. Andrew led forward, since only he could be relied on to keep a sound course across this markless country, but Keel followed hard in the track he ploughed. It was Matt, with his great weight, who found it hardest to keep the pace.

At night, in the pyramidal Jessen tent, they slept fully dressed, as close together as day-old whelps. Their sleep was not the drugged oblivion of men worn by fatigue; but a lifting of consciousness away from material bonds, from chafing furs and close-hung walls of canvas; a swift, uneasy flight above humped, white mountains.

There was no sunrise. A grey light filtered slowly through the dull circling of snow-cloud, by degrees illumining the waste of snow which fell in wind-mown inclines to the forest-girdle; and for a while there was no response. But presently a round patch, a mark on one of the upper slopes, dissolved. From that point three pricks of blackness began to creep, so slowly that their movement was scarcely perceptible against so vast a background, across the tilted plain. As long as the light lasted, hardly pausing, they crept forward; and just

as darkness fell the little circle appeared again, a span farther to the east.

Certainly Vanderheit had been thorough. There was little enough for him to work on, but he had not failed to indicate any configuration which could be observed and used as guide-post. By keeping to their compass course they should infallibly strike the Ellensk route; but, unawares, they might overshoot it. There were clefts in the rolling upland, wedged with driven snow, a trap for the traveller who followed his compass blindly; against these, Vanderheit had given due warning, by means of careful notes and elaborate sketch-maps. At the highest point on the route he had followed there stood a natural gateway of basalt. 'The southern pillar,' he said, 'which is the smaller, has from the western side the aspect of a rearing horse.' It was no small triumph, for Vanderheit and for themselves, when they passed through this gateway.

They followed him, then, with greater confidence and with keen attention. But not easily. Descending, on a course turned a little to the north, they found the headwind more troublesome, and it added to the trials of map-reading. You had to take off your gloves, the inner wool gloves, the leather ones, and the outer gauntlets; and you could not keep them off too long. The map blew out, waving like a flag, and when you had impaled it on the snow it was still hard to focus your eyes on so close and detailed an objective. At that altitude, besides, the brain was clammy; it waddled among the thin black lines, refusing to gather and to hold firmly. And the wind, blowing all the time against your face, finding any crack there was between helmet and collar, tugging the whole weight of your clothes

against patches of skin which were chapped and sensitive, made you irritable and lazy. While you stood still the blood in your feet grew cold.

Keel was best at the work now. He had, to some extent, retained his lucidity; and at times he was even voluble upon this, the only subject of discussion. He was rather fussy, and his normally disdainful voice had sharpened to a caricature of itself, so that he spoke with the mincing superiority of titled undergraduates in farce. He implied, in his speech, that he was the only intelligent member of the party. 'Well, if you care to go south of the shoulder, do so by all means. What can be the point of having a neck if one may not break it?' But usually he was right.

"If he wants to navigate, let him," Matt said to Andrew. "I must say, he does it darned shrewdly."

They were not so easy when he made novel suggestions. He wanted, suddenly, to turn south and follow another of Vanderheit's routes which led in the Gostokeff direction. "It's more interesting," he said. "Gostokeff says you get better views."

Andrew asked blandly what he meant. "We want to strike the track as far north as possible. Don't you realize Franz almost certainly made for Ellensk in the first place?"

"Franz? What Franz?"

"Leave him alone," Matt grunted. "He's being funny."

"But, what Franz?" Keel repeated.

Andrew said sharply: "Don't be foolish, Keel. Franz Grundmann."

"And who the devil's he?"

They couldn't stand there talking rubbish, and they shuffled on. But again, when they stopped an hour

later for a breather and food, Keel asked rather querulously why they couldn't turn south.

Andrew took off his gloves and arranged the map. He pointed.

"There, you see, where I've marked in pencil. That's our rendezvous with Alphonse. You see how it lies with regard to where we are now?"

"Of course I do. My dear fellow, I'm not blind. D'you think I can't read maps. Merciful Mike! where'd you people have been if I hadn't been navigating all this time, ever since we left whatsisname, Vadsö? Honestly, old thing, it's a bit thick if . . ."

"Well then!" Andrew said decisively.

Keel looked up at him, puzzled.

"But—Alphonse——?"

Matt sighed.

"Oh, Christopher!"

Andrew said, deliberately:

"Yes, Alphonse. Paillard."

Keel laughed.

"I'm frightfully sorry," he said, "the joke's on me. But I haven't the foggiest idea who you're talking about."

"We'll discuss it to-night," Andrew said, feeling too weary to discuss anything, ever. And they went on, Andrew leading.

It still looked like more snow. But the wind was constant and it kept the clouds moving in their homogeneous mass across the sky, steadily, all day. It was the second time in thirty years that this had happened; first Vanderheit and his Kazak guide, now these three. It was a tradition that voyagers so reckless should be disregarded, and the snow held aloft. It hardly mattered, they could scarcely be felt, the three queer figures that toiled so slowly across so large an arena, which the

wind, permanent and biting, swept clear of any more formidable trespasser.

¶Six versts north of where they struck the Ellensk track, in a loop of the river just as Vanderheit had marked it, they found the blockhouse. The building had been crudely repaired, and a thin ribbon of blue smoke rose a foot or two from the chimney-hole before the wind scattered it. For a time they stood staring, as travellers to the moon would wonder at discovering human habitation. Then Matt dragged the door to one side and went in.

The owner, at first invisible in the mean light of a drooping fire, was asleep in a corner on a pile of rugs, surrounded by confusion and filth. They woke him, and he showed no surprise at seeing them. A long-haired young man, dressed in a smock and ragged skin-trousers, his bare feet in unlaced American shoes. His face was blotched with the scabs remaining from insect bites, his teeth were rotten, his beard matted with dirt; but his eyes, not wholly Mongol, were not unfriendly. He was at first dazzled by the daylight which the visitors had admitted. He stood up, blinking, and let his eyes wander from one to the other. His movements were a little uncertain, a little hesitant, like those of an addict to marijuana. To their astonishment, he addressed them in Russian; halting and muffled, but to Andrew unmistakable.

Yes, he was accustomed to visitors, he said. At this season travellers passed regularly, one in thirty days, sometimes more. He smiled when they told him they had come over the hills from Os-Yefta. Os-Yefta? He had heard of it, yes, but you could not come over the hills. The snow lay all winter as high as this house

of his, you would be lost and smothered before you had covered a dozen versts. He was puzzled, nevertheless, by their having no reindeer, nothing but little sleds such as children use to help with the wood-hauling. Of himself he said little.

They were welcome, he told them, to sleep in the rear compartment of his dwelling. It was not too cold —he would keep the fire going in the front part and the heat went through. There were bugs, but he couldn't help that. Food? yes, he would give them what he had. "For myself, I do not need much food," he said. "I am a scholar, an educated man, I like solitude. You would care, perhaps, to see my book."

"Food first," Matt said.

But he brought them the book.

"Where did you get this?" Andrew demanded. "Who gave it you? When?"

It was a Russian Bible, cheaply bound, with the imprint of a Munich publisher.

"It belongs to me," the man said, snatching it away. "It is mine, my property."

"Yes, but how——?"

"A traveller gave it to me. He was grateful, yes, he was grateful for my services. He gave me the book and told me to read it and keep it. He saw, you see, that I was a man of education. A Russian? No, not a Russian, I am sure, no. I can't say what he was. No, I can't tell you. But not a Russian, not of any kind. I am Russian myself—oh yes, I have proofs, certainly I am Russian. But the traveller, no, no more than your two friends here."

He would have gone on longer, embellishing this statement, but Andrew stopped him.

"Tell me," he said, almost fiercely, "which way did

he go, do you remember? Did he go on to Ellensk? Did he say where he was going?"

"Why, certainly I remember. To Ellensk, no. No, he went east, by the path up that way, not more than a stone's throw from here. A bad path. He must have fallen in the snow, almost certainly. He would be dead now, yes, undoubtedly. He cannot have got far, no one goes that way except the hunters who are very brave and very cunning. It was madness, I told him so. . . ."

Andrew was openly excited, almost ready to start at that moment. At any rate they must start on the next day, early. Never, since Kaustborg, had his enthusiasm risen quite so high, never had he seemed so fresh, talked so freely and so buoyantly. "It's a miracle," he repeated, "falling on such a clue. I was certain he'd aimed at Ellensk, we'd have gone there and wasted whole weeks. Don't you see, Matt, don't you see, Keel, we're within striking distance!"

But Keel was unkindled by his high spirits. He was morose and sulky; he hated this doss-house, he said; he only wanted to go home. By turns he became domineering and persuasive, he spoke to Andrew as to a child. "I want you to be sensible," he said. "We've had a long trip, and in some ways a good trip. It doesn't do to overdo these things. Now my advice is that we find out from this fellow how to get deer and sleds. . . ."

And as the evening went on, as the candle burnt down and the hut grew colder, he went on arguing. Matt took no part. He was suffering from dysentery as well as his eye-trouble, and the ordeal of the last few days had produced in him a mental and physical inertia. He did not respond even when Keel tried to goad him with an argument they had started at Lust, about the

dates and birthplace of De Quincey. Keel's final mood was one of bland efficiency. "You can leave it all to me, Andrew," he said. "I'll make all arrangements. I know the route backwards, I could draw that map of Vanderheit's from memory. I'll get you to Gostokeff before you know you've started. That's a town of some size, you'll be all right there. Only do put it right out of your head, this scheme of going east again. There's nothing to see there, you can take it from me there isn't. I'm not going to go a yard more to the east. That's clear, I hope. It's no good your fretting."

Andrew had dropped asleep. He was dimly aware, at some time in the night, that Keel was shaking him. And in the morning he seemed to remember Keel saying, in a curious, tearful voice: "You don't think I've lost my guts, Andrew, surely you don't think I've lost my guts. . . ." But in the morning Keel had disappeared, and his sled was gone.

"Oh yes," the muzhik told them, "I saw him going off. He told me he was going eastward, on that track I told you of. No, he didn't say anything else."

"I'll go," Andrew said, pulling on his boots. "He won't be hard to find, with the sled-tracks. Young fool."

He was back in twenty minutes, alone. Matt met him at the doorway.

"Didn't you——?"

"Yes. Dead."

Matt scraped a thumb-nail along his lower lip.

"How?"

"At the bottom of a fissure. A drop of—not more than thirty feet. Broke his neck."

"Oh."

The muzhik had gone out and they breakfasted in silence, Andrew writing with one hand as he ate with

the other. When he had done, he folded the note and addressed it to Paillard.

The muzhik returned while they were loading the sleds.

"I want you," Andrew said, "to keep this paper, which has magic writing on it, and to give it to a traveller who will come presently from the south, from Gostokeff. Only to him, you see. It will give you good luck if you keep it and give it to him, bad luck if you lose it or give it to anyone else. The traveller is like this." He described Paillard. "To no one else, you see?"

The muzhik was generous, and they had ample return for a small quantity of tea. An hour after sunrise they were ready to start.

"Do we—bury him?" Matt asked.

"No, I don't want to waste time. I've shovelled plenty of snow over, and there'll be more soon. I've said prayers, there's no need to do anything more."

Matt said: "All right."

The muzhik tried to stop them. "Better wait!" he said. "There's snow coming, the purga perhaps."

They smiled faintly, and wished him good-bye.

Where the eastward track branched off Andrew stopped.

"Matt," he said, "I wish you'd go back to that hut. If Alphonse gets transport he'll be along in a few days. I'd rather you were there to meet him."

Matt shook his head.

"He mightn't turn up. Then I'd be stuck."

Andrew stared at his face, as if not seeing him; then caught him by the arm.

"I want you—I mean—Matt, you don't realize, you don't see what it means to me, Keel going like that. You see——"

"Don't know what it means? D'you think I don't —my God, Andrew, if I could get him back, just five minutes——"

"But you don't realize! I got him here. I drove him. I'm only stating plain facts—I drove him till he lost his head. It was all my pidgin, not his. He didn't care tuppence about Franz. He only came for my sake, to help me."

"Yes but——"

"I can't lose another, Matt. There's a limit to what size fool any man can be. I can't lose you, Matt. Honestly, do listen to me, I wish you'd go back and wait for Alphonse. I mean that, I can't, I just can't risk losing you too."

Matt said, slowly: "It's like this. I don't care to think I can't do with you what Keel thought he could by himself. You see, we always—I mean, it was always a battle of wits, battle of strength, I don't know what you call it. I can't let Keel get away with it—you see how I mean?—I mean, I don't think he'd like it. . . . It's damned cold, standing about here."

¶ According to their host at the blockhouse, the place called Sos was less than seventy versts away; a village of twenty chimneys. There they hoped for refuge and for information.

But the wind and the snow beat them.

Their route lay high, along the northern flank of the Bukavelskoi ridge, and to their left the ground sloped into the shallow valley, twenty versts across, of the Edsakoka. The trees crowded towards the river banks, and the route to Sos was higher than their topmost branches; so that the north wind, driving through a funnel between the Olmoc range and the higher hills of

Ninelinsk, swept unopposed with gathered force across the Edsakoka plain, storming the rounded Bukavelskoi hills with such continuous violence that it seemed able at last to strip them bare of their heavy cloak of snow. A headwind could scarcely have teased the travellers more cruelly than this upon their left side, which dragged all the time at their clothing, twisting helmet and loosening muffler, which threw up the fine surface snow against their faces, which drove them out of their path, carried their voices when they spoke away to the hilltops, drummed in their ears till they were deaf and aching. Before they had tramped five hours it was apparent to both men, though neither granted it, that the distance they could reach with such conditions was narrowly defined, and secretly both doubted if they could make the village. They rested with poor comfort in their little tent, pitched precariously in the very path of the gale. With no means to recruit their powers till Sos was reached, they were as swimmers who, conscious of growing weakness, see the bank approach too slowly for the lasting of their strength.

When the snow came, it was not without warning. All day the sky was heavy with snow, carried high and safely by the power of the gale, screening the sun's light so thickly that the day's colour was like late evening. The wind on the earth's surface was a little abated, as if the strength of it was wanted to keep the grey burden moving; but there were gusts and eddies of violence, a quiver in the pressed atmosphere; vision was distorted, so that the trivial hills rose more steeply, became darker and more imposing; in the silence, the continuing silence where every noise was drowned by the wind's incessant flushing, there was a sense of expectation. At nightfall a few flakes came down, and the travellers woke

next morning to find one side of the tent thickly covered. The fall had stopped then, but the sky seemed lower, it was very dark for that hour, and the wind was still more gusty. It was a struggle to fold the tent, and nearly an hour before the sleds were loaded. The storm broke just as they were starting.

The snow tumbled as though the tail-board of a loaded wagon had been suddenly unbolted; a cataract of almost solid whiteness; and when the first benumbing onslaught was over it came steadily, flung against the hillside as if by the rhythmic motion of a gigantic spade. The plain below was blotted out by the tearing flood of snow, and above there was no more sky, only the sheets of snow falling. It was very dark. Surprised, the men stood quite still, unable to see their way forward, lost to each other, believing that this unimagined occurrence could last for a few moments only. But the drive of snow was unabated. Matt, who was in the rear, groped forward a few paces and found himself at Andrew's side. They stood together then, their backs to the main line of the drift, while the snow poured against and over them; shaking themselves as it piled on their shoulders, moving a little when it threatened to inroot their legs. With the cunning of the wind which carried it the snow worked its way inside their clothing. A spatter of flakes broke loose from the main flood to attack them on the flank; a sudden reflex drove snow into their mouths and nostrils. The snow half froze as it wrapped about their bodies, turning them to pillars of crystal. They held to each other with arms interlinked, without speaking, hardly thinking except to hope desperately for their release.

All day the valley lay passive beneath that barrage, while the moving tide of snow filled the cups and

hollows of the previous covering, mounted to form new ridges along the terraced slopes, to obliterate, if it would last, the hills and valleys in one flat ocean of unbroken snowdrift. The wind, in gust following gust, drove the snow forward like a broom swung at arm's length; swept low to brush the valley's side and hurled the escaping snowflakes upwards, where, rising, they were caught by scattered eddies and twisted in a whirlpool, hurled aside, broken, thrown down again and ultimately lost in the next advancing wave. All day the wind enjoyed its easy sport, hustling the frightened snowflakes, chivvying the loiterers, whipping them into crushed battalions, driving them on till they fell prostrate in a mounting pile of fleece upon the hillside. All day the pregnant sky poured forth more snow for the wind's enjoyment, until the wind, wearying of its dog-work, made a last ferocious sortie, and fell deflated to a whispering zephyr. Only at sundown was the sky's store exhausted. Then the last surge of snow left the air clear behind it, but for a sprinkle of scattered flakes which the tired wind fingered lazily. Abruptly as it had begun, the furious skirmish ended. The sun which had lost its day showed for a few minutes, pale red and oddly beautiful, dipping behind the grey horizon. In that brief evening it revealed the same country upon which it had risen, monotonously white, tranquil. The new white cloak was no different from the old one, the day's fury might never have happened. Only the valley had risen a little, or the modest hills sunk lower. The trees still bore their larger burden. And upon a higher terrace of the hillside, which the wind had swept and overlaid with fresh snow and swept again, the two toy figures had remained in the same position, close together, still upright, whitened to match the ground

beneath them but yet distinct, objects still emergent from the snowbound plain.

¶ They beat the snow flat and raised their tent again. They ate a meal of sorts, biscuits spread with gravy essence which they chopped out of the bottle with a jack-knife; chewing slowly, speaking hardly a word. They rolled themselves in their blankets and fell into a cold, scared sleep.

They started next morning to go on again, in pale, contemptuous sunlight; and covered a mile perhaps, struggling through the piled snow, before Matt asked a minute's respite.

He said then, panting:

"Andrew I think that's—all we can do. All I can do. I think we've got to turn round now."

He was not sure if Andrew had heard. Andrew turned and looked away from him, away east, towards Sos. All those weeks, all that effort, the guarded hope . . . Keel. . . .

¶ They trudged side by side now. It was pleasanter that way, though it meant forcing two separate tracks through the resistant snow. Each held one line in his outside hand, and the second sled was towed at the stern of the first. For the last hour Matt had been trying to tell an amusing story, something funny which had happened to him in Hopetown. But he had lost his knack of story-telling, and it came jerkily, repetitive and confused, punctuated with giggles. 'The woman, you see, wouldn't let me in. I tried both doors, but she wouldn't let me in. No good, she wouldn't let me. I got to the house, I found the house all right, but she wouldn't let me in. . . .'

It was hard to tell or to listen, hard to breathe, for the wind had recovered its force and blew now upon their right side, veering to the face, with the thrust of a sharpened spear. 'But you see, don't you, that I found the house. But the woman wouldn't let me in.' Their path led upward now, to cross an elbow of the Bukavelskois, and their pace had dropped to a pitiful crawl. Below them, to the north, a few high tree tops stood out, dull green, from the snow-heap of forest, their lather shaved away by the tearing wind. The sky was clear, no snow left in it, and as if to find more snow the wind rushed screaming through the thin air.

They were not far from the top of the rise when the good idea which Matt had been nursing since the start of the day's march took shape and found expression. He stopped deliberately, and shouted in Andrew's ear:

"That second sled. We don't need it."

"What's on it?" Andrew asked.

He had clean forgotten.

"Nothing much. The stove. Biscuits. We don't want it."

"We'll want the biscuits."

"No, we've got enough food on the first one."

"Sure?"

"What?"

"Sure?"

"Enough to get us back. Can't eat all that."

"All right. No need to shout."

Andrew knelt in the snow and tried the knot on the tow-line with his gloves. He asked:

"You tied this—what sort of knot?"

"Rolling hitch."

"It isn't."

"Well, let me try."

But Matt couldn't do it, even with his outside gloves off.

Andrew said: "Wait. I'll try again."

He ran a little circle in the snow, jerking his arms: took off two pairs of gloves, knelt, and attacked the knot fiercely.

"It's no good," he said "Not worth bothering."

Matt said: "I'll cut it."

That was a good idea, Andrew thought. Matt slipped the jack-knife from his belt, but the spring was powerful and with the fur gloves on he could not open it. He took them off again.

Andrew said sharply: "Be careful, for God's sake. Don't touch that knife with your skin——"

Matt grinned. He put the knife down on the sled, waved his arms and jumped, and picked it up again.

"Hurry!" Andrew said. "Or let me."

With the second gloves off, leaving only the ones next to his hands, Matt held the handle of the knife in his right hand, between palm and finger tips, close to his chest. With his left hand he gradually secured a grip on the blade. He bent over, pressing his lips together and shaking with the effort. The knife opened.

He laughed.

"You cut."

Andrew cut the rope and they went on.

"As I was saying, she wouldn't let me in."

"Can't you stop that?" Andrew panted. "You've been saying it all morning."

"What? What d'you say? I'm sorry. I'm tired. Can't we rest?"

"Not till we get to the top."

But twenty yards farther Matt stopped and sat down in the snow. Andrew leant over him.

He said, quite gently: "Come on, Matt! Matt, come on, get up. We must keep going a bit more. We've not got much left to do now. We'll be back at the blockhouse soon. To-morrow. To-night perhaps, if we hurry. Come on!"

Matt said: "Just—just a minute!" and leant forward over the sled; where he remained, his head hanging down, his face almost touching the snow.

Andrew gently shook him.

"Come on!" he repeated. "Do get up, there's a good chap."

He caught hold of Matt's helmet and pulled up his head. But when he let it go it dropped again, limply, like a dead man's head. Matt was whimpering like a baby.

"Matt!"

He shook him.

"Matt!"

Again, more roughly.

"Matt, for the last time, will you get up! Get up, you fool. Get up, I tell you! You'll freeze if you stay like that. Get up. Blast you, Matt, get up!"

He stood up and kicked him, as hard as he could, but he had not much strength for kicking, and Matt's body was well protected. He ran and kicked again, harder, but Matt scarcely moved, only lay there sobbing. Andrew bent and said in his ear: "Can't you get up, old thing? Can't you do a bit more? It's not far."

Matt whispered: "I wish you'd go on. It's all right, only—you go on. I'm all right. I only want a rest."

Wholly nonplussed, Andrew stood a yard away, mechanically stamping and clapping his gloves together, regarding Matt's body stretched out across the sled. Curious, he thought, to see so large and powerful a man stretched out like that. It reminded him—where was

it? Gaza?—of a Turkish soldier he had seen once. Exactly that position, across the tail of a gun-carriage, the head dropped forward with the hair in the sand, one leg straight, the other drawn up in the attitude of climbing. He could see the whole thing again: the blood trickling from the soldier's neck, down his crumpled arm into a pool on the sand; the heat, the flies, someone shouting, 'See if that one's alive!' Exactly that position, one arm crumpled beneath the chest, the other stretched forward, twisted so that the palm of the hand faced upwards. The place? He couldn't remember the place; it was so hard to remember things with the wind tearing against his face all the time. Why had the Turkish soldier lain like that? But of course, it was a dead soldier. Whereas Matt. . . .

"Matt!"

Frightened, Andrew dropped on the ground, caught him by the shoulder, and heaved him over.

"Matt! Wake up! Why don't you move? You're all right, aren't you? Matt! Matt, you're not dead?"

He was sitting on the sledge now, with Matt's head across his thighs. The face had gone very white. The eyes were closed, the mouth slightly open; breathing, thank God.

"Matt! can't you wake up? Wake up, man, do wake up! Matt!"

While Andrew worked his arms and legs Matt still slept. A stubborn sleep, like the sleep of anæsthesia, the lips slavering a little, the body twitching. If he slept under such treatment nothing would wake him. In any case he was useless, not an ounce of strength left in him. Brandy might do something, but there was no brandy; like fools they had used the last of it to comfort them after the storm. 'It's his weight,' Andrew

thought vaguely, 'he's had more to carry than I.' Odd to see Matt, of all people, cracked up like that. . . .

It was hard, with the wind lashing, to reason, to make a sensible decision. But his workaday brain, the subordinate brain which governed the movements of feet and fingers, could operate now without the greater mind's direction. Standing astride Matt's body he shifted it, inches at a time, till it lay along the length of the sled, humped over the rest of the load, the head hanging down in front, the legs projecting beyond the trailing-board and falling into the snow. They would act as a brake, but there seemed to be no better way of fixing them, and the constant jerking would do something to promote circulation. There were two blankets, and with these he covered the whole body, wrapping it as tightly as he could. They would scarcely be enough. He took off his Murrayson coat—with the extra work he would be warm enough—and added that to the blankets. The tying was the most awkward thing of all. He had first to get one of the towlines loose—the spare hank he carried at his belt would not be long enough—and to change the other towline on to the central spar. ('If it breaks—.') With the two lengths knotted together —it took him five minutes to knot them—he still had little enough to rope so bulky an object firmly. It had to go once about the waist, beneath the platform, then round each shoulder, to be made fast to the ends of the foremost cross-strut. It was a poor job at that, and as like as not would chafe the arm-pits; but without more rope he could do no better. Odd, Matt looked, humped over the sled like that, trussed like a stag. Not a pretty job, Andrew thought, not really neat, as Guller or Matt would have done it. Matt—that was Matt, tied to the sled there; dying, probably.

He put on his outer gloves again and picked up the towline. He could hardly feel it, but he could keep a grip on the thing when it was twisted once about his wrist. It had taken a lot of time, all this; an hour, perhaps? No, he couldn't be certain, at present he was no good at judging time. The whole question—but it was not worth calculating, he must get as far as he could, as fast as he could.

At first he thought he would never get the sled moving. It hurt him to jerk the line, and he was afraid of breaking it. But he cleared away the snow directly in front of the runners, kicked a pit for his feet, gave the line another twist round his arm, threw the whole of his weight forward and shoved with all the strength remaining in his legs. Then the sled moved, jumped forward a foot. With his head down low, panting and sobbing, he forced his body forward, determined that the way on the sled should not be lost. In five minutes, exhausted, he had reached the top of the slope.

¶ With the Bukavelskoi ridge on his left, the sweeping arc of a gigantic circle, he could not lose his way while the light lasted; and though when darkness came there would be no moon the sky would be clear. So long as he kept his senses he could hardly go far wrong—there was only the danger of getting too far to the right, too low. His legs were standing it well, his physical strength was curiously ample when he neither stopped nor hurried. It was simply a question of maintaining a cart-horse plod, never letting it slip, never wasting breath by increasing the pace when the track dipped, never losing momentum when it rose upwards. The surface was firmer here; evidently this piece of country had escaped the worst of the storm, and the

new layer of snow was already hardened. A lighter sled would have made the going fairly easy.

There was no way of telling whether Matt was actually dead; not without unswaddling his body, which would be a waste of time and energy, risky besides. From the face, the little of that white mask which showed between the head-wrappings, you could guess nothing, and if breath still came from the lips, it was caught and lost in the scouring wind. A pity, if he were dead, a pity to drag that weight quite uselessly.

There was still an hour of light to go. Perhaps less. He found it hard to judge, for his sight was confused by the light reflected from dead whiteness against eyes made wet and sore by the wind. You could but vaguely calculate the distance of an object ahead, whether it were a break in the ground a mile away or a hollow in the snow a few yards in front. The white plain quivered, rose and fell, rippled like moving waves. There was no fixed point for the eye to rest on, only the line of the hills which was white like the ground you looked at all the time you walked, and a white road drifting endlessly beneath your feet. The watch strapped round his wrist, outside the sleeve of his smock, was still going: and it might be right, for it was sturdy against most weathers and he remembered winding it the previous night; but the two hands looked both alike, his brain would not sort them, would not translate their meaning. Already he was sleepy, and half his mind was occupied in acutely suffering the laceration of the wind. He hummed in a succession of nasal grunts the ditty which Matt had been singing spasmodically ever since Os-Yefta—*Past—eight o-clock—and it's —bedtime—for dolly. Past—eight o-clock—and it's—bedtime—for me.* It was like a bad taste in the mouth,

but it helped to keep his legs moving at an even pace. He loathed it, but it pursued him. If he sang another tune, aloud, it would yet come back to him as soon as the interloper had departed. The wind sang it through his ear-pads, the words were written upon an endless galley-slip of snow which rolled beneath him as he plodded forward.

His right hand had gone dead again; but the weight on the rope was held by the twist about his forearm, and there was still enough feel in his palm to keep the end from slipping. He doubted, now, if he could release it; and as long as he kept moving the sled would move behind him.

He wondered how long the automatous movement of his legs would last; for his feet strode forward, his heels drove alternately against the snow, the muscles from waist to toes were loosed and tightened by some-thing outside his conscious volition. It hurt him. There was a muttering, continuous pain in his calves and thighs, in the joints of his knees. All the time his legs worked so strenuously he was breathing too fast, and the ache across his chest was intensified at each drawn breath. The rope, constantly tightening across the sleeve of his smock, was biting a channel of soreness in his wrist. The snow had caked between the spikes on his boots, and the slide of his feet, a few inches back each time, seemed to double the labour of every step taken. His advance was like that of a wheel with one spoke weighted, rolled on level ground by the remnant of a dwindling momentum, the heavy spoke rising each time more reluctantly but each time carried over. When darkness came it would be still colder, and then, surely, the momentum would cease altogether. That was what he wanted: to fall face downwards in a drift of soft

snow; to lie there, to let his limbs be still, his muscles unstretched; to hide his face so deeply that the wind could get at it no longer; to be done with the journey, to forget the failure, only to be still, for ever quiet, quite still.

O-clock—and it's—bedtime—for me.

It was lonely, without Matt. They had not talked much, but there had been his huge, sane presence; he could always hear him, roaring his song against the wind, or cursing when he slipped, or if he were close enough, panting and grunting. There had been, besides, a vision of Franz waiting for them, Franz's tubby body, his matted hair, his wide, cherubic smile. His back was turned on Franz now: the long journey, the hours of sweating and the hours of passive endurance, the strain of waiting at Esstoye, the last thrust from Os-Yefta, the whole dreary sequence had collapsed into futility; beyond the hostile expanse of snow there was nothing to find now, no halting-place, nothing but the unmarked patch of snow where he had buried Keel. If only Matt would speak to him, if only he would cry out, or make the slightest movement beneath his coverings, if only he would not lie there, so quiet, so lifeless! Matt had wrecked it. It was he who had given up, turned back on the very point of victory. It was outrageous that he should have to drag Matt over the snow like this, such a heavy weight, such a useless burden. Then "I'm sorry, Matt!" he said aloud. "I didn't mean that. I didn't mean what I thought just now. You did the best you could, you did thundering well. I'm grateful, Matt, honestly I'm grateful. I'll get you back if I can. Are you comfy, Matt? Matt, can't you answer me? You're not dead, are you? Surely you can't be dead. Why don't you move? Why don't you sing, why have

you stopped singing?" He shouted: "*Why have you stopped singing?*" The wind caught his voice and swept it away. There was no echo from the hills.

He had not realized how dark it was getting. Now, with relief and fear mingled, he saw that the white had changed to a dusty grey, the sky was filmed over, green-yellow on the forward horizon. For a few moments he thought that his sight might be failing, that the wind had killed the nerves of his eyes, that he was going blind. He looked at his watch again, where the hands were now faintly luminous, but still he could not reason their meaning. It was useless, trying to guess how long he had been walking; how long since they had turned to go back, how long since Matt had collapsed—was that to-day or yesterday? It didn't matter, the only thing was to keep on walking. He was sure of that now. There was some reason for going on, though he could not think what it was. Not Franz. Franz was dead, or lost for ever in the continent of snow behind him. Ahead, the snow stretched so far in the fading light that you could not see the limit of it, still less what lay beyond. But there was something beyond, if you could get to it before you were caught.

and it's bedtime—for me.

The important thing was to keep on the level route, the hills in a line to the left, not to wander down into the valley; better to keep a little to the left, where the steepening rise of the ground would prevent you from straying too far. On the outward journey he had constantly looked back to memorize the line of travel, but in the dim light the aspect had changed, and presently he would see nothing but the line of the hilltops. That was enough, as long as he kept his attention fixed, as long as he kept awake. He dismissed at once the vague

thought of halting for the night. He had not the power, by himself, to deal with the tent; and with Matt like this, perhaps still alive, there was no time for delay. He could keep on the right track in darkness; he had done it before, in the last nights of the desert journey to Sah-Heran. If he could keep awake.

For an hour or more, perhaps two hours, he maintained his course without much effort. At times, when the wind whipped a spray of loose snow into his face, he went forward blindly, head down, his body leaning from the towline; but the night was clear, and the snow reflected all the light which the stars gave. From the right hand, not far off as it appeared, there came intermittently a glint like the flash of summer lightning or of distant battle; enough to throw the white hills, for an instant, into monstrous definition. In those brief moments he saw the naked world across which he travelled, a quilt of sheen silver; then there was nothing but the spread of stars, the uncertain reach of grey snow, the hills, a wall of grey darkness on his left hand. He trudged, now, with a conscious fortitude; for the pain of moving, of keeping up the pace, of dragging the deadweight behind him, had grown till it could be mastered only by resolution. He ate as he walked, from a handful of biscuits in his hip-pouch; but his stomach was ungrateful for such meagre fare, and he was conscious of growing weakness. He would have stopped to find himself something more substantial; but Matt's body lay over the cases, and if he stopped he might fall asleep instantly. He was counting his steps . . . *forty-seven, forty-eight, forty-nine, forty, forty-one, forty-two*. . . . It was beautifully quiet, he thought; cold, bitterly cold, but now that the search was over, now that he was resigned to hopelessness, it was magical to be so lonely,

surrounded by his own world, which the northern light lit up for him, which faded again into majestic darkness. Few men, he thought, had struggled so long against a wind so remorseless, few had nourished the hidden fire of life with so fierce, such quickening experience. There was a warmth rising within him between heart and stomach, a flame of defiance, a familiar, intoxicating anger. In the long path down which his mind's vision swept he saw the shoulders of a man moving as he moved; farther off, a line of heads swung rhythmically, not far away, not far away—but they could come no nearer, with his own oar he could keep them off. In his ears there was a rising music, the clamour of a thousand voices shouting together. That was a holy trumpet, a holy exaltation. He would fight now. Pain was a feeble shackle, it could not bind the strength of his sinews. He had proved that he was master of his body, stronger than pain, stronger than the sledge's weight which dragged against him. He had only to mark with his eye the farthest point to which vision reached, now, now as the magic light kindled his mysterious country, to set his pace against it, to count a thousand footsteps . . . *forty-six, forty-seven, forty-eight* . . . *past-eight o-clock —and it's—bedtime—for me—*. . . *forty-eight, forty-nine, forty*. . . . The sledge had grown lighter. He dragged it now as easily as a child pulling his boat along the surface of a pond. Perhaps Matt had slipped off. It didn't matter if he was dead, only. . . . He turned, and saw the hills reared behind, and knew that he had been plunging downward.

Sleep. It had nearly caught him. He remembered now how stealthily sleep would stalk him, how it would crouch behind his chair, move silently in his very footsteps across the Arabian sand. It waited till he had

forgotten, threw its velvet noose over his head, gently tightened it. He said: "I was too quick that time. I heard you coming. You thought you were so quiet, but I heard you."

The sledge still carried its load. Franz? Not Franz, someone else. He asked: "Who are you, lying there? Are you awake?" and hearing no answer—"I've no time to waste, I've slipped off my track, I was nearly asleep."

He had to kick a deep pit for his feet, to double his body, to fight, gasping and crying, for half an hour before he reached the terrace he had left. He paused there, shaking and coughing, hardly able to stand, for a full ten minutes. But his slender chance of life depended on his moving, he knew that now, he must keep moving. His brain was clearer. He remembered, it was Matt, lying there on the sled, and he had to get him to some kind of shelter. He had lost Keel, he couldn't lose Matt as well. Not even if Matt were dead, he couldn't lose him in the snow.

The rope was still about his arm, and he was moving again. His high courage had gone, and had left only a stolid endurance, enough to struggle against the clamorous pain of legs and chest. His legs still moved, thrusting against the snow with their regular plodding motion. He had learnt the trick of working them, driving them till they broke; and now there was only the danger of sleep catching him.

It pursued him, bound closely to the monotony of his body's movements, to the rhythmic labour which pumped away the resistance of his heart and blood. It hovered above his eyelids, which were held open by no object of vision save the grey snow. It drove against him, incorporate in the harsh, driving wind. It found

his weakness in the melancholy and the dull confusion of his thoughts. He had felt its presence through the hours of daylight, not far away; in the darkness its power was multiplied tenfold, and dawn, he thought, must still be many hours ahead. It would be easier to command his will and senses could he remember the objective of the journey; but his mind drifted on a narrow stream, and the high banks shut out all the landscape; he knew only that he had left Franz behind, that Matt, somehow, was close behind him, that Matt could struggle forward only by his strength, his resistance. Matt was with him, and yet he was alone. Matt was so still, so silent.

The dark hours would stretch out towards sunrise as the snow stretched towards a yellow star which hung, fixed and brilliant, above his path. Sunrise was a long way off; but the distance could not be so great as the stretch he had covered already, for it seemed that through all the hours which pile up to make a northern winter he had been moving as he moved now, driving in one foot and then the other to take firm hold on the snow, twisting the heel a little for greater security, thrusting upon it, feeling the rope tighten and the pain spread up across his back. For all those hours he had been conscious of the wind drumming on his ear-pads, of the sled's ploughshare motion, of solitude and of pain; surely the journey must be one-half over, surely he was running hard against the sunrise and daylight would show him the tall desker-posts which marked the Ellensk road. It was enough, that hope, to quicken his courage, to tighten the muscles which had moistened beneath his clothing, to infect his ice-cold blood with a little warmth. Victory. He had run with sleep before, side by side, and had proved himself the stronger; the very agony

of heart and will reminded him. The prize was nothing, he had forgotten its appearance. His mind could no longer frame the sense of living widely and freely, safe from the snow and from pursuing sleep; he remembered only the delight of battle, the glory of pain mastered, the soaring happiness it was to lie on the very summit of a conquered hill. He had reached the final slope, the steepest face of rock. Pain fought against him like a white fire, barred his passage with a sword furnaced to whiteness; sleep dragged with all its weight upon the rope tied round his arm. He prayed: 'Quicken me for this last battle, strengthen my arm against the strong arm which holds me, sharpen my sword to meet the quick, live sword which crosses it.' Pain and sleep: sleep was the stronger. Bowed like Samson, exultant in the struggle, he strove against it. "I was ready," he said. "I knew that it would come, I knew that it would follow me, I knew that it would try to catch me. Don't you remember how I trained myself, don't you remember how I prepared for the contest? It was easy, when you stood beside me, it helped me to have you with me when the struggle began. I told you that sleep would be after me, I told you how strong sleep was. You see now why I trained myself, why I set myself to become stronger. Don't you see it, now? I thought that sleep would keep me from you. I thought if sleep conquered me I should be shut away, so that I could not see you. Did you think I did it for Franz? Franz is dead. Franz has been dead all the time. It's you I fought for, I only wanted to stay with you. Keep by me, now, keep close to me. Keep near me, Greta, don't go away. It's not over yet. Greta! Greta! Don't go away. I can't keep on if you go away. Keep near me, Greta. Greta! Don't go away! Closer,

Greta, closer!" But she would not come closer to him, she moved always a little distance away, her anxious face half-turned towards him. It was enough to have her there, to know that when he had thrown sleep off he could run and be beside her. Her clothes were grey, so that he could not see them against the grey snow, he saw only her sad face, appealing to him. But her beauty filled and burnt within him so that his pain was changed to fierce sweetness. He cried with longing for her, but his desire was fierce and glorious, upholding him against the hands which clutched and throttled. Again and again he called to her, "Greta! Greta!" She would not answer him, but her eyes were fixed upon him as he struggled, her beauty passed on before him, he thought that she had smiled. "Greta! . . . Greta!" It was a miracle to watch her there, so soft her footsteps were upon the snow, leaving no trace, so quiet her lips, her eyes so deep and so compassionate. The wind throbbed in his ears no longer, there was a deep and holy silence in which they could hear their own singing music, the music of their loneliness, the song of their triumph. Pain was a garment to him now, bearing heavy upon his limbs, a close, accustomed burden; nearer to her than to his own body, he felt as if remotely, apartly, the tension and relax of muscles strained to the last of their endurance, the hammer of his struggling heart, the sled-rope tugging at his arm. To march in chains was glorious when she marched beside him, he would have fought the long passage through again to be there, chained and gasping, by the side of Greta. No one had walked where they were walking, no one had seen the stars so radiant or the snow stretched out so far in unbroken purity. Their world lay in stillness, frozen, lovely in its solitude, lighted by the quiet stars.

Sleep would not take it from them, however hard it pressed. "I am stronger now, Greta. I am strong enough to follow you however far you go, if I can breathe the air you breathe, if I can share with you the loveliness of the sunrise that is coming. Stay with me, Greta, stay with me till the battle is over."

He saw now that the yellow star had fallen, right down upon the snow; where it waved backward and forward, a tiny light docked of all its brilliance. It was a long way off, but he would reach it if he could before it perished. At least it was an object for his eyes to fix on, a distance marked for his achievement. He said aloud "I shall reach the star before it fades, I shall get so far before sleep catches me." He began again to count his steps. . . . *seventeen, eighteen, nineteen* . . . His eyes half-closed, and he had not the strength to open them again. It would do if he could hold them wide enough to see the yellow light, which flickered and bulged, swung and multiplied, contracted to a pin-prick. That was the last object of his resolution, to keep the light within his narrowed vision; and it seemed that for an hour he fought to keep it there, to sustain the intolerable weight that bore down upon his eyelids. This, he knew, was the final struggle. This was the combat against which he had armed himself so long and so laboriously. He remembered now, it was only yesterday. He said between his teeth, faintly, for his breath was thin and broken: "There, over there. Can't you see it? . . . Careful, that thing's covered with tar. . . . There, the way I'm pointing. That's the Noller Light. There, Greta, don't you see? It's coming nearer." And slowly, so slowly, while his eyes desperately held it, the light came towards him.

He had reached it, and sleep had not caught him, he had beaten sleep again. There was no more need to struggle.

He knew who it was bending over him.

He said: "I'm glad you've come, Alphonse. Listen. Listen carefully. I want to tell you something, now, before I go to sleep. There's a man down there, on the ledge, it's an awkward place to get to. I want you to get some water to him, quick. You must be quick, he's so thirsty. You'll do that, won't you, Alphonse?"

He knew, next, that he was lying on a sled, with something heavy over him. He could feel the runners moving over the snow. Then there was a smell he recognized, the blockhouse. He lay quite still, and presently opened his eyes. There was a lamp standing on the ground, and Alphonse, close by, was bending over something, something long and dark. Another man was kneeling beside him, and he tasted brandy. The brandy made him choke, and he sat up. Alphonse said: "Lie down, you can sleep now. There is no need to stay awake any more."

But he did not sleep. His eyes were closed, and he breathed heavily like a man sleeping. But the warmth flooding his body had quickened his mind, and only his senses lay lifeless. His mind leapt and struggled, he reasoned upon Goethe and Plato, he argued with Franz about theology. All the events of the long journey went past in procession before his mind's eyes while the hours of darkness lasted. He prayed for sleep, but sleep would not come to him. When daylight lifted his eyelids he knew that his consciousness had been unbroken. He had defeated sleep, and sleep, defeated, had left him.

5

THE Sina cracked its surface, and the whole mass of ice began to move. For days the giant floes drifted, jostling and creaking, on a hastening current, and at last the news came from Igotoe that the river was open to Tsensk.

Anton Mestenov was at once relieved and sorry. The instructions telegraphed to him had been a source of anxiety: his prisoners were to be watched closely, they must on no account escape (and in which direction, he wondered, was escape supposed to be possible?); it must be understood that they were enemies of the Union, deserving the severest treatment; they must not, on the other hand, be allowed to die, however ill they might be; they must not be denied ordinary courtesy, indeed, special courtesy, nor such comforts as they might reasonably demand. Mestenov was a conscientious officer, and it was evident that authority was deeply concerned about the four men whom an evil chance had delivered into his hands. If only, he had thought more than once, his subordinate at Gostokeff had dealt with them out of hand, what a lot of trouble everyone would have been saved. One message after another, it was enough to worry a man to death. And yet he liked them; they gave him as little trouble as they could, they talked to him of places he had neither seen nor imagined, they were pathetically grateful for anything he did, anything he provided. He was not a little proud, too, of the recovery they had made during

their sojourn in the schoolhouse under his care. The big one had been close on dead when they came, and look at him now! It would be a pity, Mestenov thought, if they were all executed when they got to Tsensk. "I am so sorry," he said to the lean one who spoke Russian so fluently, "that you are to be shot at Tsensk. To me it seems a pity, after all you have been through. But we have had a pleasant time, have we not? Our friendship has been so charming, so full of interest."

The tug-boat came down from Igotoe; you could see the black smoke smudging the sky when it was half a day away. The barges were already loaded when it arrived. Two of them, piled with birch and pine to the level of the deck-house roof, the gunwales hardly above the surface of the water. There was also the barge for prisoners and other passengers, and that too was ready with the prisoners on board; a score of them besides the foreigners, participants in the recent timber strike, due for trial at Tsensk. The journey would start, Mestenov said, to-morrow early. "At seven o'clock," he told the tugmaster, "you must be ready then, certainly." The tugmaster, bored and indifferent, found friends in the township and by midnight was drunk to speechlessness. "But you have not drunk anything," his friend Moellier said, "come on now, enjoy yourself as in the good old days." All through the next two days the tug-boat belched smoke, covering the township with smuts, soiling the fresh snow for a mile around. The Manchu stoker, who was engineer as well, kept the furnace going assiduously. It burned oil and timber, oil when there was no timber, timber when there was no oil, sometimes oil and timber together. It was a good engine, built in Glasgow thirty years before, and though it no longer produced more than

half its original power it seldom went wrong. The furnace only went out an hour or so before the tugmaster, furious at the Manchu's negligence, returned. Two of the passengers had gone off up country, in the hopes of a shot at the wolves which had been reported; but they returned next day, and on the following morning the journey started. Mestenov came on board to say good-bye, and he had a tin of oatmeal for each of the four prisoners. "You can escape at Tsensk, perhaps," he said wistfully. "There are so many people there. You could slip away in the crowd." He held his hand at the salute, very stiffly, all the time that he was being rowed back to the jetty.

The passenger barge was towed rearmost, and from the deck the passengers could see nothing ahead but a mountain of timber and the leaning column of black smoke. Against so rapid a current the tug with its heavy drag made laborious progress, and the banks were so far away that there was hardly any sense of motion. You had to hold a finger upright, mark a tree-trunk—if you could single one from the stockade of trees—and with a steady eye mark the two objects pass and widen; only then could you be sure that you were moving. When the wind was ahead, covering your face and clothes with flakes of soot, you could hear faintly the ostentatious chugging of the engine; but it was hard to connect so distant and so infirm a sound with the barge's progress.

For Guller, seated on the deck with his back against the low rail, it was enough that they moved at all. The sun, which a few weeks hence would begin to melt the snow, already shone pallidly upon the water and cast faintly a lemon-coloured light against the snow-girt forest. In that sunshine, though it had little

warmth, there was a promise; and they were moving, however slowly, on a homeward journey. It seemed that the banks grew no closer, that there was no limit to the reach of forest, that he had been transported to yet another country which was always the same and which had no boundaries. With Gostokeff and Jessensk left behind they might be drifting again, farther and farther, from the world in which there were bolts on doors and a street where you might see a cigarette-box lying amid the rubbish. Yet he knew that the fence of pines would at last give way, that the curving river would always turn towards the south. There was a little useless ventilator on the deck, and near the base the name *Johnson* was embossed. That was a comfortable portent. It was not too cold now, if he sat with a great coat round his legs; already the earliest mosquitoes were hatching; and he had only to sit there, quite still, watching the sluggish movement of the trees, while the barge bore him homeward. He would have quickened the journey, and sometimes his impatience was almost overpowering; yet even as the days lengthened into weeks he found an odd delight in patience, and he thought sometimes that he could not enjoy too long the sensation of returning. To know that the days were growing longer, to see the forest sloughing every day a little of its snow, to feel the increasing power of the sun; still more, to know that his courage would be tried no further; that the worst of his pain was over; these were a consolation so profound and lasting that he would eke it out over the monotony of succeeding days and unaltered vistas. Hardly, since the ecstatic week of his matriculation, had he been so happy.

"I don't mind," he said to Paillard, "as long as we're going back. It's rough on Andrew, he's fed up you can

see. 'Course, I oughtn't to be so blooming pleased. It's like laughin' on the way home from a burying. But y' can't help it. Look at the sun now, 'n' the way the trees are getting the snow all melted off."

"The sun, yes," Paillard said. "Yes, indeed, hotter every day. But not hot enough for you to sit like this all the time. You must walk a little."

He stretched a hand and pulled him up.

"Here, take my arm."

But Guller preferred to have both crutches. He was becoming clever in their manipulation and he could get across the deck at its widest part in four hops now. He no longer forgot and tried to rest his weight on the foot that was missing.

"What's Andrew doing?" he asked.

"He is resting," Paillard looked at his watch. "Yes, three o'clock. It is about the same time, every day, that his headache comes. But there is nothing I can do, nothing."

The common prisoners were carried aft, where the deck was caged over; sometimes, in a following wind, the forward passengers got the smell of them. They were not badly off, it appeared; they had plenty of food of a rough kind and enough tobacco with what they begged through the grill. One of them died on the fifth day, but the rest seemed quite healthy and generally cheerful, at least resigned. At night they sang to a balalaika, and it was plain from the energy of their singing as the night went on that they were not wholly deprived of vodka. "We are rather cramped, yes," a mild-eyed elderly prisoner said to Andrew, "but so, it is warmer. And we do not expect luxuries, we of Yakutsk. The food's better than we got in the timber-yard. What? Oh, I don't know, no one can say.

Some say they will send us to Sakhalin, but I don't think so. I don't think they send people there now. But it doesn't matter, we were right in refusing to work. You couldn't eat the food they gave us.' To look after these prisoners there were five guards, never less than three on duty. The foreigners had, as a rule, only one, a youth of rough manners but well disposed, willing to do anything, except clean out the saloon, for a twist of tobacco. He wore black riding-boots and spurs of which he was proud, coarse grey trousers and a jacket belonging to a uniform of the Imperial Infantry. A pouch was slung from his shoulder, and for the Lee-Metford rifle which he faithfully carried when not actually serving his prisoners, he possessed a dozen twelve-bore duck cartridges. Matt, who could talk for half an hour now without undue exhaustion, held long conversations with him in phrase-book Russian. The guard helped him on deck, they lay side by side beneath a common blanket, and Matt explained in gestures the mechanism of the Lee-Metford. It passed the time, and for Matt it was better to sit up here—whatever Paillard said—than to lie on his bunk in the saloon, where everyone slept and ate and drank and played cards and smoked rank tobacco from morning till night. He was a nice fellow to talk to, this boy with the raffish uniform; never bored or sulky, and his wit was about equal to Matt's own in his present state. Everyone else was a little *difficile*, Guller with his clumsy sympathy, Andrew with his absent-mindedness and headaches, Paillard fussing over everybody. As for the four other saloon passengers, they were dumb oxen; Great Russians; two of them minor officials in the timber trade, jumped-up *petits-bourgeois* who talked to each other incessantly in creaking whispers as if there were spies looking, who

glanced this way and that from the corners of their mean little eyes; the others muzhiks, father and son, returning in the nope of work in the new tin factories, who talked hardly at all but constantly spat and gutted, and whose other habits, equally uncultured, had results still more offensive. They would not be approached, they would say nothing but a dour 'good morning.' The four of them played kazitan together till late each evening. None of them undressed for sleep.

At Igotoe, a sprawl of hovels in a clearing on the east bank, there came on board an unexpected passenger, a young German-American engineer; to begin with, exceedingly friendly. He was in charge of the power station being erected at Pista Pessin, about three hundred versts up-country from Igotoe; a big show, he told them. He talked at length about his work. Too much for one man, he said; he had to do everything himself. His foremen were Russians, said to be engineers, army-trained, congenital idiots. He had to check up everything himself, make castings with his own hands. Russians, they were quite hopeless; they had no idea of accuracy, of punctuality, of time, money, morality or the proper use of latrines; he loved them, but they were quite impossible, they stole every single thing that they could use or at least exhibit in their dwellings; the people at Tsensk sent him the wrong materials, when he asked for an engineer they sent him a peasant, if he wanted a bricklayer they waited six months and sent him a bank clerk. He was on his way to the capital now, and he was going to raise Cain. He was going to tell them it was utterly impossible to work under such conditions, that the whole scheme had gone phut, it was their fault, and he washed his hands of it. And then? Then he was going to go back and start again.

When he had told his story to each of them in turn, and complained about the food and had the saloon cleaned out, he betook himself to his own berth; where, lying on his stomach with his papers spread over a suitcase, he worked steadily, smoking one cigarette after another, for the rest of the journey. Only once did he show any curiosity about his fellow passengers. "And you," he asked, "where are you going, what are you going to do?" Matt told him. "We're going to prison." "Well, avoid the one at Tobolsk if you can. They say it's damp. D'you mind moving just a bit, you're in my light. There's no light in this goddam bug-raft."

A trifle dotty, Paillard thought; but in this community of a dozen persons none was wholly normal, and sometimes he wondered about the condition of his own mind. He himself had dysentery in a mild form, and that might be enough to induce a slight psychological disarrangement. He made some tests; but it is difficult to vet oneself for latent insanity, and he had other things to think of. Matt was coming on; his abundant vitality had proved equal to severe treatment; at present he was a little childish sometimes, but that would go when the wasted reserves had been made up. Andrew was the major problem. 'It's my head, Alphonse,' he said, 'it aches in the afternoon. It's nothing, only this stuffy barge. How can one keep fit?—one's never clean, everything's dirty. I've lived in tents with nomads but never in quite such a stink.' But it was more than that. Disappointment, Paillard thought, enlarged by debility to set up a condition of suppressed nervous excitement. There was very little to show, only a certain detachment, a dreaminess, a slight irritability. 'It's stuffy, Alphonse. You don't notice it, because Frenchmen are born to live in a fug, but it's damnably stuffy. And why will

no one clean out this place?' His berth was below Paillard's. Again and again, waking in the night, Paillard leaned down and found the lower berth empty. Once he followed him outside and found him standing against the deckhouse with a blanket round his shoulders, his feet stuck bare into his boots.

"Andrew what are you doing?"

"Who's that? Is that you, Alphonse? You frightened me. Go back to bed, do please, like a good chap. It's cold out here, it'll be bad for your bowels."

"But you, you must come back too."

"Me? I'm all right. No, I won't go back, it's so stuffy, I can't stand that man snoring."

"Andrew, you are not well. What's wrong with you? Why don't you tell me?"

"I'm perfectly fit. Only I can't stand the fug in that cabin. Do go back and get some sleep."

'It will be better,' Paillard thought, 'when we get away from this boat.' The trouble was partly boredom; he himself felt it; but he could not be sure how much of his patient's condition was due to ennui, how much to the barge's shocking sanitation, and how much to antecedent causes. 'Mais pour la plupart,' he thought hopefully, 'ce n'est peut-être que l'ennui, cette malaise.' They had been too long together, they four.

No one ever mentioned Keel, but his absence was felt between them. When they sat for a meal together at one of the two tables they wondered for a moment where the fifth man was. Secretly they thought of him often, recalling his liveliness instead of his more sombre humours, wondering if they had shown him too little kindness. Guller, who had never ceased to be rather frightened of him, remembered now how Keel had kept his sarcasm for the others, treating him always with a

certain gentleness. Matt, poignantly aware that Keel had been a sturdy butt, a pleasant foil for his callous humour, sought in his own conduct some reason for what had happened. He was in a fit state to brood, and in the loss of Keel he found ample subject for his brooding. He wanted to talk about him to Andrew, but Andrew was not fit for it. It was frightening, Andrew's manner of glancing round, looking for someone, the way his eyes passed unseeing across your face, the pain in them when he realized, once again, that the one he looked for was missing. There was a shyness between them, rooted partly in Keel and partly in something else.

"There's something I want to tell you," Matt had said, one evening when Andrew lay beside him in the schoolhouse at Jessensk. "Alphonse told me what happened—you know, when he found us. I hadn't realized till he told me——"

"You're talking too much," Andrew had said abruptly. "I can't listen, I can't concentrate on things, not just yet. Do keep quiet if you can."

Awake at night sometimes, scared by a dream of snow in mountain-waves advancing to engulf him, Matt heard the steady beat of footsteps on the planks above his head; somebody pacing the deck, and he knew that it was Andrew. Afraid, in his convalescence, to go out and join him, he listened intently, hoping that Andrew would soon come down. It got on his nerves, that sound, so that he could have cried with pain and anger each time the steps returned. But on each occasion he was asleep again before Andrew came back to bed.

"What's wrong with him, Alphonse?" he asked. "Why does he always go out at night?"

Paillard shrugged his shoulders.

"He's been ill. His nerves are out of order. He will improve when summer comes."

Slowly the summer was coming, and even the Russians began going out on deck in the afternoons, to survey the parade of tree trunks, to spit over the side and be bitten by the eager, young mosquitoes. The river was quite free from ice at last, the banks had come closer, there were birds flying low across the water. Ahead the view was always blocked by the towering pile of timber, from morning till night the trees passed, greener now as the snow was dwindling, and at night you still saw them, dark walls against the river's edge. It was better then to be below, where lungs and nostrils had become used to the smoke-laden, reeking air, and where, till after midnight, there was at least the ghost of cheerfulness in the yellow light of the two lamps gently swinging from the central beam, the murmur of talk at the card table, the muffled sound of music from the quarters aft. Like ghosts they sat, murmuring or silent, within the pools of light, while some lay on their berths already snoring. If you listened with your ear against the barge's side you might hear faintly the lap and rustle of the broken water; and yet it was hard to believe in the barge's motion, save for the shadows which moved an inch or two as the lamps swung. In this small chamber life had come to immobility. Sometimes while a minute passed there was utter silence, till a man coughed or struck a match or crackled a piece of paper. In that interval of stillness, when the players scrutinized the hands held motionless before them, while a book's page was grasped ready for turning and the ash on a cigarette lengthened, their existence was portrayed. It was a motion picture, made up of one scene endlessly repeated. The saloon grew dark, the guard brought

the lighted lamps; and at some time after midnight, if someone thought of it, they were extinguished. That was all. The saloon remained the same, the tables were always in the same position, the passengers in the same places. In the morning the Englishmen went up to breathe clean air, and there were the trees, the same trees surely that they had seen at sunset, passing in slow procession. Far away they could hear the chuffing of the unseen tug-boat, intent as ever upon its business. What business—as the trees passed, the sun rose and sank again, the Sina mocked the conception of distance—they had almost forgotten.

¶ Yet the train of barges drifted towards the summer. As the snow melted the trees thinned out, by degrees they crept back from the Sina's banks, and at last took refuge on the high ground a dozen versts away. The Sina twisted then into a wide plain, where the grass had grown a vivid green beneath the winter's covering, and the snow lay only in patches that were so far sheltered by the hills from the sun's increasing energy. One morning there was a tarred cabin standing not far back from the river's edge; and Guller, who saw it first, called everyone to come and look. But soon the cabins were a commonplace, there was smoke rising from the chimneys, a man standing at the doorway, and in time children, who ran towards the river to see the barges pass. Towards evening, when the air was very clear, they could see far south the faint line of the Vaniania Mountains.

¶ They first saw Tsensk one evening just as the light was failing; a smudge in the middle distance, with five tall chimneys rising. When daylight returned the town

was not far off, and by noon the west bank was covered with wooden houses. There the tug-boat slipped her barges, which were moored to a raft in mid-river, and without ceremony steamed upstream. The barges lay unattended, apparently unnoticed by anyone ashore; while Schonnen the American engineer stood raving on the deck and the Russians continued to play kazitan, punctuating the joyless ceremony with tiny glasses of vesta-zef jerked mechanically down their throats. The common prisoners stood in a line on the side facing the nearer bank, holding the grill and gazing stolidly at the blind houses. Next morning, shortly before eleven, a Ford lorry fiercely driven came slithering to a halt at the water's edge, and two men in uniform were rowed out in the ferry.

Coming aboard, they nodded to the young guard, who casually saluted them.

"I see you have five men here," the senior said. "There should only be four according to our information."

"The fifth is from Igotoe," the guard told them.

"Well, no matter."

Paillard was standing close by.

"I must ask you to be careful," he said in his halting Russian. "These three men are my patients. One, as you can see, is lame, and this one is very feeble. That thing you have there won't do to move them, you must get something with better springs."

The officer may not have understood him. The Ford, at any rate, was the only transport available, and in this the five foreigners with their luggage were driven away.

"Who were they, do you think?" one of the Russians asked.

"The steward says they are wealthy Ukrainians in disguise. They were caught stealing timber. They are

to be executed at Moscow. The bottle, if you please, Mikhail Andreyevitch!"

Clear of the wooden encampment, the Ford was driven at its best speed towards the town. The road was in no ordinary sense made-up; but since the snow had gone a few lorry loads of broken bricks had been thrown down where the mud was softest, and every vehicle passing did something to roll them in. On both sides there was a wire fence, held by concrete posts, and a mile from the centre of the town the surface became solid concrete. From fields that were bare of any buildings save cabins of iron and wood the road led abruptly into a street of factories, half a mile of concrete walls rising flat to a height of ninety feet. Without braking, the Ford swung left, narrowly missing a dray pulled by four horses, and bounced over the cobbles into the Old Market, where about the stone church of Saint Estica the same squat buildings clustered that had seen her birth. Through a street half in ruins, in which the iron frame of the new Mesetter factory rose from the very midst of roofless cottages, they came to the river bank again, where the new concrete road ran side by side with the cobbles and where the ancient granaries, which would be demolished soon, were covered from head to foot with the apophthegms and exhortations of enfranchisement. On the narrow Sabelov Bridge the line of market wagons set their own pace to the impatient motor lorries, and both were hindered by the walkers, who, filling every crack between the cart wheels and the bridge's ramps, dashed recklessly in front of hoofs and bonnets to gain a better place. In that noisy, jostling throng the Ford was held for fully seven minutes. When it emerged it gathered speed again,

roaring for free passage; turned right from a street of concrete cottage-boxes to race along a narrow gravelled road between wooden huts, stacked girders, railway-wagons; and drew up suddenly, as if by an inspiration of the moment, at a country villa of French design, left somehow standing amid the jumbled paraphernalia of construction.

The five men were led inside and taken downstairs to a long room in the basement. It had been used as a billiard-room, and the billiard-table, with the cloth in tatters, still stood at one end against the wall. There was no other furniture.

"You will wait here, please, a few minutes," one of the guards said.

"Just a minute!" Schonnen said. "There's something I want to explain. You fellows have got the wrong label on me, there's been a mistake, I——"

"You will wait here," the guard repeated, "a few minutes, please."

He went out and locked the door.

They waited. Food was brought, and in time, bedding. A week later they were led upstairs again and driven to the station.

¶ For just a moment as it rolled past him Guller caught the whiff of the great engine; Vyle's lubricant, and water boiled in a rusting tank; a hot, close smell. He inhaled it rapturously; it was the first of familiar odours, and he had scarcely hoped to smell it again.

¶ They all but longed, as the train rumbled westward, to be back in the Sina barge. There they had been granted at least the freedom to walk on deck, from the bows as far as the cage; had at least lain full length every

night to sleep. They were lucky, the guards told them, to have a carriage; less distinguished prisoners had as a rule to travel in the wagons. With a seat each side, and blankets to lie on, what more could they want? But their coach was old stock, the springs worn to uselessness, and as days went by, as the weather grew hotter, they found the compartment too cramped a living-space for five men. They were hitched to the back of a freight-train from Khailar, which made its way towards Moscow with an air of pilgrimage, as if content to spend a lifetime in pedestrian progress toward the sacred city. It was run on a loopline when one of the westward expresses was due to pass, and on the loopline it would wait sometimes for hours together. It stopped at irregular intervals, without regard to day or night; for fuelling, to collect a wagon or two, to change the engine, or for no apparent purpose. When the train stopped, the guards, who occupied the next compartment, came as a rule to unlock the doors. Only then was relief possible, and it had to be managed quickly. With the same irregularity food was brought, and they depended chiefly on what they could buy, with Schonnen's small stock of money, from casual vendors who approached the train at halting-places. They were permitted to alight for relief only; the guards, though well disposed, were cautious, and exercise was not considered necessary. Throughout the journey they were obliged to wear the same clothes, and they had no materials for shaving.

It was a curious agony, this journey, a suffering which became intense by the accumulation of small discomforts. Even Schonnen, a robust man hardened to rough conditions, found his temper frayed and his spirit weakened by the prolonged confinement and

monotony, in which he could neither work nor idle with enjoyment. His rage had turned to sour forbearance, then to a mordant humour. Lots of people, he said, were going to get their tails twisted over this piece of monumental crassness; there'd be some pretty terms handed out when the authorities got to hear of it. 'The idea of it!' he said again and again, 'tying me up with you people!' Not that he meant anything rude by that, they must understand. He'd been a tourist himself, in his college days, and got into trouble with the gendarmerie just as they had. 'But when you consider what I've done for these swine.' Yet the others envied him, for at least he had arrived at Tsensk in clean underclothes, he had both his feet in working order, no dysentery, no splitting headache at three o'clock in the afternoon. For them there was, to crown their troubles, the burden of uncertainty. 'What will happen,' they asked the guards, 'when we get to Moscow?' 'Who can tell?' was the answer. 'And for that matter, how do you know it's Moscow? Our orders may be changed half a dozen times before we get there.' 'And where are we now, how far is there to go? Many hours? Many days?' 'You must pardon us, we are ordered to give no information.' Schonnen was no help, he never looked out of carriage-windows, he said. The names on the halts conveyed nothing, and by accident or design it was always at night-time that they passed through the larger places, never stopping at the passenger station. They thought, 'It cannot be more than two days now, three perhaps.' They said aloud, 'Four days, surely not more, you can see how the country's changing.' But the country changed only by imperceptible degrees, and it hurt their tired eyes to watch its dilatory passage. For hours on end, for a

whole day's travelling, there would be hardly house or tree to break the monotony of the sweeping plain, nothing for the eye to rest on. It was relief when daylight faded, when the land from which there seemed to be no escape was drowned in an ocean of darkness, through which they rode, unhappy voyagers, in a narrow vessel, separate from all humanity, exiled alike from the noise of taverns and the warm fragrance of summer trees. They forgot, then, that their direction had altered, and it seemed that this was only another stage of the outward journey which had occupied half their lives. The motion had changed, and there was added now a tormenting vibration. But essentially it was part of their continuous experience to squat or lie comfortless in a narrow space, in the box behind a deer-train or a barge's common cabin, while in the darkness the lifeless country passed meaninglessly by. They must forget the plain outside, take comfort from the windows which showed nothing but another carriageful of vagabonds, try to believe that by not too rare a magic the carriage would presently halt before the bright lights of some familiar station, Ealing Broadway, Périgueux. Sometimes they travelled far in darkness before the guards were persuaded, by shouts and repeated thumping on the partition, to come along the footboard and fix up the light. It did not greatly matter, since every scrap of their reading was twice exhausted; only in the secret fear they had that someone, awake in the darkness, would lose his reason. When the lamp was brought they sat as they had done before, as they had sat all day, all week; constantly shifting in their seats, talking spasmodically in short and trivial sentences, occasionally changing positions, smoking when they had tobacco, rarely smiling. It was the pleasantest part of the day,

cooler, and the yellow light was quieter to the eyes than the sunlight coming through the hot glass. The mosquitoes, troublesome all day, became ferocious after sunset: but there was occupation of a sort in killing them. The prisoners prolonged those evenings, often till the lamps burned out. Then they shifted once again, shared out and arranged the blankets, and fell by agreement into silence. Sometimes the vibration, constant, rasping, continued through the night. Sometimes the train stopped with a jolt, stood still an hour, plunged forward, stopped again. Occasionally they saw passing in confusion the meagre lights of a straggling town; a long, deserted station meanly lighted; dimly, a line of trucks and granaries; then the black plain once more, lasting until the morning. In those hours they were always thirsty, and only when the train was at a standstill did the chance occur, for those who by rote enjoyed full-length positions, to achieve the sensation of rest. Throughout the night you hardly ceased to be aware of the hard surface against your head, of the creases in your clothing; of the dried sweat in crutch and armpits, the odour of your own body, the chill, tainted air. You woke, if you had passed beyond the edge of sleep, with your mouth dry and sour and your head aching with a renewed consciousness that you were beyond endurance dirty. And generally you saw, with the early light slanting through the window, the figure of Andrew sitting upright; his feet on the seat before him, elbows against his thighs, chin resting on clasped hands. His eyes, as a rule, were open; but they seemed to see nothing. There was still the vibration. That would go on all day and for days to come.

It is strange to live for days and nights together with the same four men, shut up in a shaking box. And

they realized only half-consciously, reluctant to admit it further, the fact that Andrew was separate from them. He spoke as of old, he smiled sometimes, he had retained his fortitude. But he did not seem to share that cloistered life; his eyes, if they saw anything at all, saw something different from the scene the others were aware of, the dirty carriage, the bearded men sprawling, the plain rolling past the windows. He was no longer the leader of their expedition, but a man with a purpose different from theirs. His thoughts were so far away that often, when they spoke to him, he made no reply. It was of Keel, perhaps, that he was thinking; perhaps he still thought of Franz, still suffered the pangs of failure. They only knew, vaguely, that his illness was different from theirs, that the journey had differently changed him.

"Are you all right, Andrew?" Paillard constantly whispered.

"I'm tired," was his only answer.

¶ It was Matt who woke first, when the train slowed down, to find the light of early morning shut off by something outside the window. He rubbed his eyes and saw tall houses, many-windowed, filthy with the smoke of engines. Still half-asleep he wondered: Durban? London?—and knew that it was neither. There was something different in those houses, and yet familiar. Yes, he remembered now, Istanbul. But surely——

He banged on the wall, so furiously that one of the guards came.

"What is it? What is it?" the man grumbled.

"Where have we got to?" Matt asked him.

"Moskva."

The interview took place late at night in Buchkof's private office on the top floor of the former Veliky Hotel, where bookshelves and steel filing cabinets hid almost every foot of the lazurite walls, and where Buchkof sat alone at a table so littered with papers that the intarsia surface was completely hidden. Pulling his chair forward a little, he said:

"Sit down please, Mr. Wild. You can clear out, Pyotr Astrov. Wait at the end of the corridor."

When the door closed he did not look up, but continued to scrutinize the typewritten report in his hand. In a more casual meeting, Andrew would not have recognized him, so completely had he changed. He was considerably fatter, his face seemed larger with the beard trimmed almost to imperial pattern, his eyes were pouched, and his neck, which had once been so skinny that you always noticed the Adam's-apple bobbing like a tennis-ball in fluid, was now so generously covered that the loose flesh had begun to roll over. He was almost bald. For the pince-nez of his Geneva and London days he had substituted horn-rimmed glasses, hexagonal in shape, which gave a certain boldness to his face but failed to hide the weariness in his eyes. He was better fed, perhaps, than he had been in Prescott Terrace; certainly better dressed, almost a dandy in his winged collar and neat blue suit; he was older, more mature, infinitely more confident; but no less overworked, no less tired.

He put down the paper at last and said, glancing presbyopically above his spectacles:

"You were found at Gostokeff, yes? And you were quartered for some time at Jessensk. That would be —I have a map here—ah yes, as I thought, there.

I see. From there you were taken to Tsensk, I understand. Tsensk, I have been there. We have interesting developments there, just beginning. A long journey. You were properly treated? There were orders given that you should be well treated."

"We were usually treated with consideration," Andrew said. "Though sometimes without much cleverness."

"Well, cleverness you can hardly expect in that part of the world—I didn't even know whether the instructions would go through properly. You must understand that in these remote places the people are primitive, a very low class. Your journalists do not always seem to understand that."

"No. The mistake has been made by foreign journalists about India and Siberia equally. No, I have no complaints. Up to now we have been exceedingly fortunate."

Buchkof said: "Yes, you have."

He turned over his papers and found the one he wanted.

"I have here," he said, "a copy of the statement you made at Jessensk. You stated that your unauthorized entry into Russian territory was made with the sole purpose of 'finding and if possible rescuing the German missionary Franz Grundmann.' Is that true?"

"Quite true."

"No other purpose whatever?"

"None."

"And you didn't find him?"

"No. It was a complete failure."

"That," said Buchkof drily, "is perhaps not very surprising. Siberia is fairly large."

"As to that, I had some information. Grundmann

discussed his plans with me in some detail, a long time ago. If I had been——"

"And here too we have some information, a good deal of it. The perambulations of Herr Grundmann were extensive and abnormal. He was not without cunning in his tactics—it cost us quite a lot of money to keep in touch with him. Look, here it is, the Grundmann file. Pages and pages, quite a large bill for paper and stenography alone. And here's the last document, on the top of the file. You see—'Authoritatively reported dead.' That came just a week after I wrote to you. I am sorry I did not pass the news on—it would have saved so much trouble. But frankly, it never occurred to me that you would be quite so fool hardy. No, I will be quite frank, I never thought of such a thing."

"No, I suppose you didn't."

Buchkof stood up.

"I don't believe you," he said. "I don't believe a word of what you say. I don't know what you were up to, but you were working for your government, one way or another. To make a journey like that just to rescue a mad priest—you insult our intelligence, asking us to believe such a story. Why don't you tell the truth? Come on now, it will prove best in the long run!"

Andrew sat very still. Tired as he was, he found it diverting to see Buchkof in this new mood. Buchkof, the down-at-heel student with a tattered Engels under his arm, the shy young man who had refused to be drawn into conversation at Mrs. Wild's soirées in Oakley Street, the untidy poet who had been so pathetically grateful for a supper at Gastoni's or an introduction to the Bodleian.

"I'm tired, Buchkof," he said slowly. "I've not been sleeping well——"

"And me, do you think I'm not tired? Do you think I sleep? Tell me now, what were you doing, what were you trying to do when you were caught?"

"I've told you already, I——"

"I've told you I don't believe a word of that. I might if you belonged to any other race on earth, but you can't trust an Englishman—the English don't know the difference between truth and falsehood. Their morality——"

Andrew interrupted him.

"No doubt you're right, but the point, surely, is a little academic. Interesting, of course. I remember how in the old days we—however, the point is——"

"The point is this. What are you going to write in your newspaper articles if we let you go back? I don't say we shall, mind, but if we do? What sort of lies are you going to tell about us? What sort of conception have you of our ideology, how are you going to relate your casual observations to each other? You see, we here are becoming a little tired of the portentous and callow observations of your literary tourists. The campaign of calumny which your English newspapers have been waging——"

"Let me reassure you, Buchkof. I shall write nothing. I have too much else to do, too many other things to write. You may remember that I am interested in metaphysics——"

"—And your friends, what of them?"

"Most unlikely. I can get their promise, if you like——"

"Their promise!"

"Or a signed statement, if you prefer it."

"What is the good of signed statements, when the signatories are two or three thousand miles away? Come, Wild, surely you don't think——"

"Then what, precisely, do you want?"

Buchkof took off his spectacles, shut a drawer, and sat down.

"You think I'm fussy, of course. You think I'm making a mountain out of a molehill. I'm afraid you have not the least conception of what we, engaged in the largest task ever attempted in man's history, have to reckon with. Because our birth-pangs were violent we are regarded by the rest of the world as a bastard republic, to be treated without the common decencies accorded to other nations. It is a sport to mock, a virtue to deride us. 'The Russians, they have no money, no soldiers.' And you, my friend, having landed on our shores without permission—and which country, tell me please, allows such casual entrance with impunity?—having refused to give any reasonable account of your intentions, having treated us as unworthy either of courtesy or of intelligent caution, you calmly ask our permission to return to your own country without penalty or protest so that you may report our secrets to your employers and then sit down to write scurrilous articles in your newspapers saying how badly you have been treated. Do you imagine that I——"

"Will you listen please, Buchkof! Everything you say may be perfectly correct—that is to say, I have no means of refuting it—except your statement that I and my friends have asked for your clemency. That is what you have to prove. And you can't do it. No, we have asked for nothing, not even for this interview. We await the course of law. For you it is a simple matter, surely. You can prosecute, according to the

evidence you have available, either for spying or for infringement of your alien code. If the evidence suffices only to prove the latter offence, one presumes that the penalty will not amount——"

"A simple matter, you said? Yes, a very simple matter. You have such an exact knowledge of jurisprudence, my friend, such an intimate experience of international diplomacy. A simple matter! A simple prosecution at common law! Have you any conception——"

"I'm sorry, Buchkof, if I offend you, but really I have no intention—I'm tired, as I told you, I'm rather a sick man. I'm afraid I don't think very clearly in my present state. If you will only tell me——"

"No, Mr. Wild, you do not think clearly. *Pyotr!* No, neither you nor your countrymen think very clearly."

He went over to one of the shelves, took down a book, and began to read it, his back turned to the prisoner. But as they waited for the orderly he swung round and asked sharply:

"Your mother, Mrs. Wild, she is alive still?"

"No, she died four—five years ago."

"Indeed? I am sorry. She was remarkable, a personality. A good woman. Pyotr Astrov, you can take this individual away; and I will see Comrade Serebryakov now."

Next day there was a more formal examination in the Oveskilin Institute, at which all the prisoners, including Schonnen, were present. They sat on cane chairs in one of the lecture rooms. The walls were hung with charts relating to tuberculosis, vaccination, gonorrhœa and the extermination of rats. There was a large blackboard covered with trigonometrical calculations; cups, saucers, plates, books, retorts and crucibles

jumbled together on a table which ran the whole length of the room; here and there portraits, crudely framed, Marx twinkling ferociously above his beard, Lenin mild and Mongolian; cobwebs everywhere. The big windows were shut, but the noise of the traffic in the street below was loud enough to make conversation awkward. The room grew steadily hotter. The two guards, lounging near the door with their rifles propped against a desk nearby, lit cigarettes. Matt sent one of them to buy a packet and the prisoners also smoked.

Shortly after twelve Buchkof came in, talking rapidly with three others. They were followed after ten minutes by two more men. One of them came over and spoke to the prisoners; he had instructions to watch the case, he said, the other was present as interpreter. All six sat down on one side of the lecturer's table, facing the five prisoners, and for several minutes continued talking between themselves in rapid undertones. Andrew recognized one of them; a shabby little hunchback who wore neither collar nor tie, Kotozhavin himself, unmistakable. The guards stood upright now, holding their rifles, mildly bored. The prisoners sat silent, apparently forgotten by everyone. The flies buzzed continuously. Nothing happened.

At last Schonnen stood up.

"I wish here and now to protest," he said, "at being unlawfully held under arrest."

The examiners stopped talking. Buchkof went over to one of the desks, opened his despatch case, sat down with his back to the assembly and began writing. Kotozhavin, after glancing sharply at the intruder, took a French novel from the pocket of his uniform and settled himself comfortably to read. The man on his left lit a fresh cigarette, while the fourth examiner,

evidently presiding, folded his hands and stared at Schonnen in mild inquiry.

"I beg your pardon," he said, and turned to the interpreter. "What is the prisoner saying?"

The interpreter said: "I don't know."

"Do you not understand plain Russian?" Schonnen asked with strangled dignity.

"He says he is speaking in Russian, Comrade Zestiev," the interpreter announced.

"Of course!" Zestiev said politely. "The noise of the traffic is rather troublesome. If you will kindly repeat your statement——?"

For ten minutes without a pause Schonnen related his grievances. He had, in the past few weeks, found ample time to rehearse his narrative, and it was a fluent performance. Zestiev listened attentively, notes were taken, fresh cigarettes were lighted.

"And now," Zestiev said, "we can proceed to the main business. You have the papers, Ivan Ayestovich——"

The man addressed sat up, sorted his papers, and began to read. The interpreter translated into French, sentence by sentence. Outside, the tram drivers furiously clanged their bells. None of the prisoners except Andrew and Paillard understood a word of either version.

Coffee was brought, with more cigarettes. The flies dithered in the heat and smoke, flung themselves recklessly against the windowpanes, smoothed their wings and started once again on their hopeless perambulations. Kotozhavin, finding a smutty paragraph, chuckled nasally. The prisoners' statements were taken.

Andrew spoke only briefly. They had already signed a statement, he said, and there was nothing new to add. There could be no evidence contradictory to the facts

stated. They were guilty of a technical offence, having made an unauthorized entry into Soviet territory for a humane purpose. That was all. Mr. Schonnen was not of the party.

Zestiev interrupted for the first time:

"Edward Taunton Keel. That was the name communicated to us by our agent at Jessensk."

"Schonnen? We have the name here as Keel."

"A mistake has arisen. The Keel to whom you refer is dead. We lost him."

"You lost him?"

"Yes."

"And you found this man?"

Schonnen, aware that he was being discussed, stood up again.

"Let me explain once more——"

But Zestiev stopped him.

"Quite unnecessary, Mr. Keel—Mr. Schonnen, just as you wish. We understand perfectly."

He glanced at his watch and nudged his junior, who nodded. The four principals went out. The interpreter spat and went out. The watching barrister came over to Andrew. "You did very well, if I may say so. Your statement was admirable, succinct and most convincing. I could almost have believed it was true. And you, Mr. Keel, you spoke very well. I hope you will all do as well when the case comes into Court." He passed round his ivory cigarette case, smiled, smoothed his hair, and went out.

The guards perched themselves on one of the tables and started a lazy game of mezo-pleo with a five-faced die. The prisoners sat in silence, sweating, Guller asleep. Matt had tried again to open one of the windows, ignoring the guards' rebuke, but the frames were

tightly stuck. The air became heavier and more stifling; there would be thunder before very long, Paillard thought; and a smell like that of hair burning came in through the open door. Reaching a point of vantage above the opposite roofs the sun shone obliquely through the windows now, lighting broad ribbons of golden dust, revealing hideously the stains on the tables and the soilure of the fly-blown charts. Andrew, with his legs stretched out at full length, sat back and stared blankly at a diagram on the blackboard, drumming the measure of *Johnny Ball* with two finger nails on the floor. "*Eppur non si muove,*" he said. Ninety minutes passed and the officials returned.

Zestiev had by no means wasted the interval. The effects of the previous session, when the floating dust had settled freely on his sweat-damped face, were successfully obliterated. He was spruce again, with clean collar and a clean dry skin, and he brought with him the fragrance of good toilet-soap tinged with that of Benedictine. In his bag was a speech, typewritten in fair, slightly archaic English. He bowed slightly to the prisoners, sat down, took out the speech, glanced through it, and began to read. His English accent was that of a cultured Frenchman. He read slowly, marking the periods, carefully stressing the words italicized. Paillard listened attentively. Andrew watched Zestiev's face, aware of the brilliance which had brought a man thus palpably of social culture through 1917, through 1918, landing him high as well as dry upon the farther shore: a smooth face, the skin white even on such a day as this, perfectly shaved; the cheekbones high and p.otrusive, a high forehead, thin eyebrows and narrow lips; eyes which, if they turned your way, looked always at some object a yard beyond your head. In speaking,

Zestiev used his lips with the utmost economy; they never opened farther than the shape of the vowel required.

It was a good speech, if a little moralsome, and it deserved a better audience than the five men lounging at the other side of the room, four in retarded convalescence and one cherishing a grievance, two overtly bored, all of them sweating and stifled by the close heat. Zestiev had become accustomed to such indifference, and he had never cared much about the fools who gaped at him in the Court itself, so long as the newspapers reported him correctly. To him it was the forensic art that mattered, the close and even texture of a speech's logic, the choice of phrase, the balance, the flow, the swift and telling peroration. He spoke now with deliberate suavity, with a certain paternal unction. (Already the carbon duplicates were on their way to the offices of *Pravda* and *Izvestia*.) He sketched briefly the history and the aims of the Russian Demos, enlarged upon 'the magnitude of this experiment in the construction of an humane constitution,' upon 'the complexity and variety of the problems which we, an united nation bent upon the working out of our own salvation, are engaged every day in solving by means of our moral cohesion, our determined nationalism, our unconquerable faith in the power of man to make mankind both happy and free.' In a task of such immensity success depended to a great extent upon watchfulness, upon jealousy of the people's liberty, upon the vigorous suppression of those anti-social forces which, however disguised by a cloak of benignity, were seeking to infect the body politic with a poison which at length would atrophy and then destroy it. In time the Demos, sure of itself, could afford to treat with leniency such hostile intention. For the

present, no other nation needed so diligently to guard itself against insidious attacks from within and from without.

"You will realize, then, that our anxiety is grave when we find in our midst the subjects of an alien state, a state whose conception of social morality is entirely different from, is bitterly opposed to our own; a state which, if we are straightforwardly to interpret the public utterance of its leading citizens, is deeply hostile to and secretly fearful of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. When, moreover, the approach of these aliens has been clandestine and their intentions unformulated, our anxiety must needs be increased. You have treated us with scant courtesy. You have supposed, because your ideology is different from ours, that you are entitled to behave towards a nation many times larger than your own without regard to those principles of chivalry and decorum which are so prominent a feature in the expressed traditions of your national life. These are the facts gleaned from this examination, which I shall be obliged to place before the People's Commissary for Justice. The Court appointed may consider with gravity the curious inadequacy of your explanation. I have been careful so far to avoid the use of the ugly word 'spy.' The Court may consider itself obliged to be less squeamish. If that word is used, if that word is repeated, if it is pressed, I feel that a more adequate defence than the one you have offered to me will be necessary before it is finally scored out; for words such as these, once they have escaped, cannot easily be imprisoned again." He paused. "You must be familiar with the fate of spies in your own country; indeed, in every part of the world. You would not, I trust, expect a nation pressed as we are to be more lenient."

Zestiev folded his papers and sat down. There was a moment's silence, then a murmur of polite applause; it came, to his surprise, from the prisoners.

¶The examination had one immediate result. The prisoners were moved. They had been quartered under guard in a room on the first floor of a small hotel in the Kitai Gorod; where, from the window, they could watch the crowds that swarmed all day in the narrow Sukhanaya. They had liked this place for the noise and movement, despite its shabbiness and squalor. They were taken now, at night, in a closed drozhki, to the model prison at Medsa Koi; a mountain of yellow brick a mile beyond the tram terminus, with its eastern windows looking across the Vodzinskoi Park towards the new Mechanics' Suburb, while those on the other side faced the high, faded houses lining the Seckov Boulevard. Inside, both cells and corridors were painted with a green wash which dried to the hardness and almost to the lustre of enamel. It was easy to clean, this wash, and it was cleaned nearly every day. There were no failures in detail, the windows opened and shut easily, the sinks and drains were in perfect order; but the smell of antiseptic which filled the building from roof to basement was mingled with another odour, hard to label, not unlike that of a cigarette newly stubbed upon an ashtray.

They were well looked after here; carefully deloused upon admission, better nourished than they had been in the Kitai Gorod, inspected by a doctor every morning and, for some unstated reason, weighed. Paillard was vastly impressed with the paraphernalia of efficiency. Only exercise was denied them. The weather was not suitable, the gaolers said; and, indeed, the rain continued

to drip steadily, day after day, making the boulevard a string of lakes and watercourses; but from one window in their corridor they could see down into the central yard, and there a score of men would always be walking.

The gaolers had nothing to tell them. "We don't know how long you will be here. Your trial? What trial? No one has said anything about a trial. No, we know nothing." No one in Russia knew anything. Matt had recovered his normality sufficiently to be argumentative again, and would stoutly defend the régime in all its manifestations against Guller, who with dour obstinacy maintained the superiority of Clerkenwell to a dozen Moscows; but in this mausoleum of emotions even Matt grew listless. It was hard to preserve an even temper, living thus idly with the same four companions, shut off from fellow prisoners as well as from the outer world; with the drizzle falling all day on the shabby boulevard, making it hardly more bearable to the eye than the green monotony of the walls within; fearing sometimes that they were forgotten, doomed to grow old and mad in that close habitation; urging time forward, yet dreading the moment when news would be given. They were long accustomed to the exercise of patience, to withstand the monotony by which vast distance must be conquered. The steppes were behind them now. But they had yet to reach the limit of time, which spun out no less inexorably than the Sina's windings. They had reached a place of stillness, hard and stable; it was a relief to which their nerves became used slowly, and there was added now the greater tension of supreme uncertainty. "We keep the windows barred," one of the gaolers told them, "but you must not think it is to restrain your liberty. It is rather for your convenience. We found before that accidents occurred

when the prisoners were bored or frightened." As the days passed they came to understand him.

They worried, whispering between themselves, about Andrew. He was so distrait and so silent.

¶ The gaoler they disliked, the young, goat-faced former bank-clerk who grumbled all the time about the stupidity of the damned Bolsheviki and the abominable way the prison staff was fed, was the first to bring them news. Schonnen had departed that morning; by tireless petitioning he had at last secured an interview with one Telyegin, an official who knew him personally and whose witness had proved sufficient to override the accumulated scepticism; he had been re-examined, granted a free pardon, and sent back to Tsensk. On that account the gaoler was annoyed.

"They ask me why I didn't tell them, why I didn't know he wasn't the same as you. How should I know, hearing lies all day from scores of prisoners? You can't believe what a prisoner says—I'd sooner trust a Bolshevik." He stood in the midst of them, scowling as if they had conspired to hoodwink him. "Well, you four aren't going to get off as lightly as that, don't you imagine it. I've heard a bit of news to-day."

They asked, unable to conceal excitement: "What news?"

The gaoler smiled mysteriously.

"Most interesting," he said. "I only heard it myself an hour ago. The superintendent was reading the letter when I went in to report."

Matt said: "Come on, you lousy bastard, spit it out."

"Who are you calling a bastard?" the gaoler demanded.

"He doesn't mean it," Paillard said, stammering nervously over the Slav consonants. "Tell us please, please tell us, is the trial fixed?"

"The trial. Who's been talking to you about a trial? That shows what a lot you know"

"Then what is your news?" Andrew asked.

"You'll know to-morrow morning," the gaoler said, and went away laughing.

Till midnight they played spelling games, which Paillard generally won. "The man invented it," Matt said more than once. "No one's told him anything, you can bet your last dollar." And they all agreed that there was nothing in it at all. "He's peevish to-night," Guller said, "he wanted to show off, that's all." None of the other gaolers had heard anything. "If he had any news he would tell us," Paillard repeated, "a man like that can't keep a secret." Andrew, as usual, said nothing, and they were secretly angry with him for failing to join in the game of corporate optimism.

Towards one o'clock, reluctantly, they separated into the two cells which they occupied at night. No one came to lock them in. Ovestin, the night guard, had gone into town for the summer Festival and by now was lying drunk in one of the less regular soldiers' clubs. "If I'm late by chance," he had said, handing them the cell keys, "you'll perhaps be so kind as to lock each other in."

Andrew did not undress. He sat on the side of his cot with an empty pipe in his mouth, looking at his nails. Matt, who shared the cell, was not specially perturbed—Andrew had behaved like this before.

"Do you want the light kept on?" he asked.

"Just as you like."

Matt turned it out and got into bed, determined that

his nerves should not spoil the night's rest. But the noisier element was returning now from the Festival, and a continuous stream of country people was passing along the boulevard below their window, dragging its feet through the squelching mud, lugubriously singing. It seemed to be the same song all the time, dying out and then revived by a new contingent, a dirge of the bazaars and caravans, the words inaudible. The rain was falling steadily. In the cell the air was moist and very hot. Matt got up and for a time stood naked at the window, rubbing his breath's moisture from the glass and looking down at the procession. There were a few lamps carried, and he could see here and there a draggled banner; but between the lamps it was as if the surface of the street were moving, a slow, snakish movement. He was startled by Andrew's voice asking:

"Does this remind you of Pawlmawr?"

"Does what?"

"This noise."

"No, why should it? Yes, perhaps it does."

He lay down again. The maddening dirge continued, flattened by the whispering rain, and he heard it still when he passed into semi-consciousness. The crowd was after him, he could hear their angry murmur as he stumbled through the burning snow. They had him with a rope fastened round his stomach and he couldn't get away. They knew it, they were laughing at him because he had no clothes on, they were singing to infuriate him.

Someone put the light on. He was sure he had not slept, but time must have passed, for a faint daylight was showing outside the window. It was still raining. Andrew sat as he had been sitting when the light was on before, his hands folded, his legs stuck out before him.

There was something important about to-day; for a moment Matt could not think what it was, then he remembered. "You'll know to-morrow morning," that fellow had said. Matt had known straight away: as far as he could see, there was only one interpretation.

Old Ovestin stood by the door, yellow from the night's indulgence and shaking with nervousness.

"Mary Mother of God have pity on you," he said gloomily. Then, "The office of the superintendent. In ten minutes. Hurry, please."

Guller and Paillard were already there when they reached the office. The deputy, unshaved, his tunic fastened by only one button, was in charge. On the floor lay a heap of clothing, instruments, assorted articles: the property of the prisoners, sent through from Gostokeff.

"I want you to examine that stuff," the deputy said. "Be quick, please." And a minute later: "Now will you sign this please, yes, all four of you."

"But first," Paillard objected, "what is the nature of the document?"

The deputy crushed his cigarette-end between thumb and forefinger and flung it into a corner with a gesture of exasperation.

"What does it matter? A mere formality."

They signed. The deputy waved the document to dry the ink, folded it twice and locked it in a drawer.

"Is the car ready, Ovestin?"

"Yes."

"I'm sorry. You people should have had some coffee. No time now. Good-bye."

They were driven a mile along the empty boulevard, the car throwing out a spray of liquid mud as it rocked through the puddles; left on to the half-built ring-way,

and across an unfenced track to the Troitzich highroad; then left again, towards the city. The rain falling all night had cooled the air at last, and in the open car it was quite cold. There were two guards, one beside the driver and one behind with the prisoners. No one spoke.

The sky was heavy with low, grey cloud, and the shadowed daylight stayed constant, as if the sun had lingered upon the threshold. There was no wind at all, no movement in the trees. The prisoners stood together in the field where the car had stopped; a long, narrow, grassless field, bounded on three sides by a concrete wall surmounted with barbed wire, on the fourth by iron-roofed huts of concrete. Not far off a few soldiers in great-coats stood in a group, talking and smoking cigarettes, their arms piled a few feet away. The prisoners could just hear their voices. The guards had gone back to the car and were squatting together on the footboard, their collars turned up, a horse-blanket across their knees. They were waiting for someone.

Matt said: "A mere formality, one supposes."

No one answered him.

The rain increased while they waited. It fell straight, douching the prisoners' bare heads and soaking their shoulders, which were covered only with the thin coats served to them in prison. Guller was the most wretched; there was a new, hard pain where his right foot had once been. But none of them was much affected by discomfort, they suffered rather from a desperate impatience. The field was some distance from the main road, and the sound of any car which at that early hour might be running out towards Troitzich would perhaps be cloaked by the steady mutter of rain falling on the sodden turf.

The voices of the soldiers were only an undertone of sound, no less constant than the noise of the rain. No one stirred, except to throw away one cigarette or light another, and even these movements appeared, by some quality of the grey, still light, as wholly automatic. The rain, screening with vertical streaks the whole field of vision, increased that unreality; and it was hard to remember, standing there, by what process and across what interval the last restless evening in the prison cell had merged into this curious hour. Time, since they arrived at Moskow, had been slowing down; each day the sun's journey had lasted longer, the span in fruitless idleness between one meal and the next had seemed to lengthen; and time had run down at last to stillness. Nothing would change now, except by the abruptness of waking from a dream. They would stand there, silent, unable to speak lest the final thread of courage be severed. The soldiers would go on murmuring, the rain would fall vertically through the gloomy twilight into the still, bare field. There was no cause for difference, it was impossible that anything should alter. In that lay their protection, the last support of their dwindling hopefulness. Nothing so ordinary as a rifle fired, as a pellet of common steel twisting through nerves and blood-cells, could break the chill sabbath which they stood enduring, numbed against bodily sensation, almost against awareness.

Yet it was, in the event, an ordinary noise which ended the vigil. They heard far away the popple of a motor-bicycle, which steadily grew louder and broke to a roar as the rider changed gear to swing off the highroad. He came slithering across the field, dismounted as his engine petered out, and handed a message to one of the guards, who opened and read it.

The guard seemed puzzled. His eyebrows puckering, he read the message again. Then, holding the paper in one hand, he came slowly towards the prisoners. Stiff and white they watched him; he seemed to be a long time coming.

"You're to get back in the car," he said.

Three of them, walking like automatons, obeyed him. Andrew did not move.

"Here, you! In the car, buck up!"

"What do you say? I didn't hear you."

Paillard went back and took him by the arm.

"Come on!" he said.

Sitting in the car they shivered, suddenly aware how cold and wet they were.

"What did he say?" Andrew asked. "I didn't understand. Where are we going?"

Paillard said in his professional voice: "It's all right, they're only taking us for a ride."

Matt started.

"What did you say? For a ride? That's good, Alphonse, that's a good remark, that's good." And he began to laugh.

"But I don't understand——"

"For a ride," Matt shouted, "for a ride, you fool, can't you see how bloody funny that is," and he went on laughing.

Guller joined him and they laughed together, with high raucous laughter, all the way to the Brest station; where, locked in a first-class carriage, they subsided into guilty silence, like children who have behaved too boisterously. They discovered, then, that beneath their wet clothes they were sweating.

They were in Warsaw next morning.

6

On the platform Paillard was still pleading.

"I don't like it," he repeated. "I don't like leaving you here. You're not well, Andrew. I would rather stay, if you will not come back with us."

There was a high clamour about them, an engine shunting, a woman repeatedly asking questions, a child trying to sell French magazines. Andrew smiled distantly; he seemed to be confused with the stir, with the reporters still badgering in a group. He said slowly:

"No. No, thank you. No, Alphonse, I'd rather stay here, I'd rather be alone."

In the carriage he made a little speech, halting and awkward.

"I'm sorry, not coming back with you. . . . I hate —leaving you. I'll write, yes I'll write soon. You've all been . . . I'm tremendously grateful. I wish . . . I hope you'll have a good journey."

Matt said in his ear:

"I'll come back to you . . . about a fortnight. . . . Are you all right for boodle?"

Andrew stepped down to the platform only just in time. The train, labelled *Warszawie—Berlin—Köln—Paris*, without the smallest ceremony started to move. Matt, appearing at the window, shouted "Good luck! *A rivederci!*" Then there was only the rail gleaming, the row of wagons behind.

¶ At last he was alone. He walked through the shabby station, down the Aleja Jerozolimska, and on

to the Poniatowskiego Bridge. Then he realized that he was going in a wrong direction, and stopped. For a time he leant upon the parapet and watched the men working half-naked upon the dredging barges moored a hundred yards upstream. It was hot, even to stand there beneath the high sun, but he hardly realized that the sweat was running down his cheeks. He was alone, and conscious at last of liberty. There was no longer any need to talk, to be sensible, to pretend that he felt well.

Behind him a procession of long trough-wagons, piled high with jumble and domestic hardware, rattled across the bridge. A peasant seated on the prow of a sofa with his feet dangling over the horse's rump called out to ask him the time. He answered, without thinking, in Russian: "Half-past two!"

Half-past two. He must be back before three, when the pain would begin. He turned and walked away briskly.

There were still ten minutes to go when he reached the Europejski. "Any letters for me yet?" he asked. The porter, handing him his key, said "No." He went up to his room, still littered with Matt's rubbish—guide books, tobacco tins, French yellow-backs; locked the door and lay down. It was a cool room, and at that hour silent.

The pain did not come till nearly four o'clock: it had seldom been so late before. It came suddenly, a draught of coldness passing up his back, leaving his body tingling as if it were licked by flames: and immediately the hot vice closed upon the nerves behind his eyes, tightening until it forced a scream between his teeth, which were biting hard upon the pillow-case. While the agony was most intense he lay in darkness, totally blind. In a few seconds the grip relaxed, his

vision gradually returned. He lay then with his eyes closed, enduring, weeping against the pillow, unconscious of all things but continuing pain. In half an hour it was over; there was nothing left but a slight neuralgia, which would go soon if he kept quiet, or might last, a needless souvenir, until the early hours of morning. He got up and moved to the chair which stood by the window, holding his head very steadily lest any sudden jerk should start a new attack, careful even in the way he breathed. Ten minutes afterwards, with rising courage, he rang the bell and ordered a cup of tea.

He had made no plan. It was upon an impulse that he asked a porter: "Can you get me a call to Kaustborg? Yes, that's right. I want to speak to the British consulate there. Mr. Phelhove is the man I want. How long, do you think? All right, I'll wait about here."

He sat on a settee in the vestibule, content to be idle, and nearly an hour passed before the connexion was established. "I've got you through," the man said. But when he listened there was a drone, with Polish voices submerged beneath it.

At last he heard "Kaustborg!" distinctly, and gave the number which the porter had told him. At once a woman's voice said: "British Consulate."

"I want Mr. Phelhove," he said.

"He is out of town, I'm sorry."

A new voice asked in Polish if he wanted the connexion held, and he answered: "Yes, yes." After an interval the woman's voice came again, "British Consulate."

"Can you get me switched over to the Central Hotel?" he asked.

A long pause.

"Did you say the Central Hotel? Yes? I have the number for you, four-six, eight-six, five."

"Yes, but I'm on a trunk line. Can't you have me put through? You can get the exchange on another line."

There was no answer, but he heard presently, "Kaustborg, Exchange."

"I want four-six, eight-six, five."

Immediately—

"Central speaking!"

"I want to know," he began, "can you tell me about some people who were staying at the hotel rather more than a year ago? The name——"

"Who is it speaking?" the Central asked.

"That doesn't matter. I want to know——"

"I can't hear you. Can you speak more clearly?"

"I want to know——"

The drone began again, alternating with a stutter of Morse. Then the Polish voice:

"Have you finished with Kaustborg?"

"No," he shouted. "No, will you hold the connexion please, it's most important——"

From a confusion of sound the Polish voice at length emerged again.

"I'm sorry, I can't get Kaustborg. The line's blocked."

Exasperation made his mind work quickly.

"How do the trains run to Danzig?" he asked the porter. "The night trains?"

"The best is at ten-thirty," the man told him.

He considered for a moment. A railway carriage, it was as good a place as any to spend the night in. And he hated Warsaw, he had always hated it; as sordid as Moscow, with nothing of Moscow's fascination, nothing of her grotesque exuberance. Danzig, yes, it was handy. There might be a quicker way, but Danzig would do.

He said: "I want a ticket for to-night's train. Second-class, single. No, not a couchette, but reserve a corner seat if you can."

The porter was startled. Only Englishmen behaved like that, and this man could not be English, he was too brown and spoke Polish too fluently.

"But you can't leave your room," he protested. "Visitors are required to give notice before midday."

Andrew said: "You can send the tickets up to my room. My bag will be ready at ten. I shall want a cab."

He packed his belongings: a small outfit—the party had taken with them most of the remaining kit; and dined early at a beer-house in the Plac Teatralny. There was nothing to do, then, but wait for the time of the train. The evening was sultry and he felt too tired to do much walking. Returning to his room he tried to read one of the books left by Matt; in which a brunette called Tommy Latriche moved steadily up a street in one of the southern faubourgs, at the rate of one house one chapter, sleeping successively with a railway-porter, a seller of lobsters, a clerk in the Home Department, a bankrupt financier, an artist in pastiche, a robber of bank-safes. On the courtyard terrace dinner was in progress, a band of four fiddles played Strauss and Chopin with furious gaiety, and presently the young officers who had been dining began to dance a polka with the handsome Jewesses, twisting gravely and deftly upon a wooden platform between the flower beds and fountains. That would go on till nearly midnight. He got up and shut the window; it was better to be stifled than to have those saccharine harmonies drumming on his membranes; but with a liberality of schnapps all round, the Roumanian fiddlers were moved to still greater exertions, and the noise was only blunted,

never stilled, by the glass in the windows. The tunes were in his brain already, and he knew that they would sing in his head all through the night, the beats fastened to the rhythm of the carriage wheels. Already, as the shadows of the dancers lengthened across the court, time began to move more slowly. In the hours of evening his consciousness of time increased, time seemed to lag and falter in its progress until, when darkness came, it almost halted. He had been used to a quickening of the clock-hand's movement as the hours came nearer midnight. Now, when he only wanted time to hasten, it was yet resistant to his will. Nine o'clock; a quarter past nine; twenty minutes past; twenty-one; at last, twenty-two.

The baggage-boy, switching on the light, was surprised to see the room's owner sitting near the window, wide awake, with a book open on his lap. He asked:

"Don't you want the light, sir?"

"No. It doesn't matter. What's the time now?"

"Five to ten."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"All right. There's my bag, it's ready."

¶During the night the man sitting beside him, often leaning against him, snored prodigiously, with a sound like a foal's neigh; he was a farmer, who, while the light was still on, had talked at length about the cruel burden of taxation, how hard it was to make ends meet, how his wife had a pain in her breast which jumped up and down like a frog, 'like a great green frog, she says.' He would like to go to Russia, he said: 'They tell me there's no taxation there, every man keeps what he grows'; in Poland there was nothing but tyranny. Several times, when the train lurched on the points,

Andrew had to push the man away, for he was a corpulent fellow, and rank with garlic.

The blinds had not been pulled down, and the light came early. He was surprised, when he could see the faces in the carriage, to find that they were not the familiar ones; for, as he sat in the darkness, his mind had wandered, encouraged by the rhythmic vibration. At about four he went to the lavatory, stripped to the waist, and washed as well as he could with the water trickling sparsely from a spring tap. When he returned the farmer had slumped across the corner seat and was snoring more loudly than before; he did not wake when he was moved. The train dawdled, hour after hour, across the flat, yellow landscape.

The farmer woke in the outskirts of Dirschau. He spat lustily on the floor and relit a cheroot he had half-smoked the night before.

"And you," he asked amiably, "did you sleep well?"

"Not very well."

"So? I didn't disturb you, I hope. My wife tells me that I snore sometimes."

"No, no. I am a poor sleeper—I have been through an illness, a kind of illness. I don't sleep very well."

¶ At a travel-office in the Hunde Gasse the clerk told him there was a steamer for Kaustborg sailing next morning.

"Not before?"

"Not as far as I know. This one, it is only small, a cargo steamer taking a few passengers. But quite comfortable."

"All right."

He was impatient, now, to be at sea. The sea, he thought, would soothe and freshen him. And now

there was a whole day to get through first. He went to call on Doctor Leismann, with whom he had stayed a few years before in Königsberg; but the house had been turned into a solicitor's office, and no one seemed to know where Leismann had gone. He lunched frugally, forgot the time as he wandered up and down the Langemarkt staring without comprehension into the shop windows, and was forced to have his bad hour on a seat in some public gardens. The hotel where he had left his bag was a small one close to the station. He did not return there till nearly midnight, preferring, when the parks were shut, to walk backwards and forwards along the river bank, making the night shorter. He was accosted once by a policeman. "You had better be abed," the policeman said. "There's a dangerous element about, this time of night, especially by the river here." "I don't sleep very well," he answered. All night, in the stuffy third-floor room, there was a welcome uproar from the engines shunting on the sidings directly below his window.

It was sunny when the steamer cast off and ploughed across the bay. She was a grimy coasting freighter flying the flag of Esthonia, squat-funnelled, broad in the beam. She would ride well, he thought, but slowly, too slowly, for now his impatience dragged forward again and he ached to be at Kaustborg. 'I shall get news there,' he thought, 'at least they will be able to tell me something.' He hired a chair from the reluctant steward and sat on the after-deck, where an amateurish awning served to keep off the smuts. There were a dozen other passengers, chiefly commercial. Till Danzig was out of sight two faded lady tourists argued passionately whether the Tower of Marienkirche were higher than the Weston Building in Cincinnati.

At sea there was this blessing: no one cared whether he went to bed. And he stayed on deck all night, watching with a certain pleasure the phosphorescence of the bow-wave, the lighting of the smooth sky when the sun rose. He thought: 'Before it is dark again I shall be in Kaustborg'; and was a little frightened lest that experience should overwhelm him; since already the ship's lazy roll and the saline air blowing from the northern gulf had stirred his emotions with a lingering melancholy. 'At Kaustborg,' he thought, 'everything will remind me of wasted opportunity.'

He spent a great part of the morning under conversation from the ladies, relieved that they expected so little on his part; his natural shyness was increased by a year's absence from such intercourse, and before mid-day his brain was at its sleepiest. Had he really been in Russia, they asked him, right in, not just across the border? Was he really one of those four men they had read about in the *Christian Science Monitor?* How wonderful that was, and how educational. They reached Kaustborg hardly before two, and the ladies feared they would miss their train to Helsingfors.

On the quay there were motor-coaches and victorias with white, fringed awnings, ice-cream barrows and women with coloured postcards, all ready for the white paddle-steamers which brought trippers every hour from Sidestad on the other side of the bay. The sycamores were in full leaf, the dust rose in clouds from the carriage wheels, even the white houses seemed to have become a little tanned in the continuing sunshine. But to Andrew the harbour, the quayside houses and the narrow towers beyond had an odd familiarity, as if he had spent the whole of childhood within this simple pattern. Vadsö, where the wind had come laden with

heavy sea-mist, was dim in his memory, and this was the last scene he remembered clearly in the life that had passed away, the life where he saw himself as a separate being. He realized, as he walked towards the centre of the town carrying his bag, how much and how vividly the place had lain upon his under-running thoughts, how often his mind had held and fondled this picture. At Warsaw it had still been veiled. Here he was back in a self-haunted city, now at last he had solid shapes to cradle his elusive dreams. At a shipping office he asked if the *Oenexia* were likely to be in shortly; but no one knew. That was too much to hope for. He must be content with the assurance Kaustborg gave him, that the solid world in which he had passed the former life remained, ready to receive him if he could cure his malady and start to live again.

As yet he lacked courage to go to the Central. What had seemed so easy six hundred miles away was harder now, and he dreaded the frustration of the hope which Kaustborg had kindled. He would wait. To-morrow morning, or to-night perhaps, when he had dined and rested, he would be ready to ask his question firmly and without embarrassment.

The chiming of the Guild House clock, two phrases for the half-hour, reminded him that he had had no luncheon. He turned to see if there was a restaurant nearby and realized, attacked by a moment's giddiness, that he was weak with hunger and the heat. In half an hour the pain might come. A taxi stopped beside him and the driver offered service. "Hotel, sir? Torger Museum? A trip to the forest, to Eujala?" Almost without reflection he said, "Villa Lavrova," and stepped inside.

The door was opened by Mme. Delapoutière herself.

The sun was right in her eyes, and she could not at once see who he was.

She asked: "Do you wish to see my husband?"

"Have you forgotten me?" he said.

She drew her breath sharply.

"Andrew! But I—I didn't know—I thought you were dead. There was no news——"

"Can I come inside?" he asked. "I want to lie down. I've got a headache coming on." Why did she stare at him like that? "Didn't you see the news in the papers? It was in the London papers. . . . Is there a room where I can lie down?"

"But of course!" She had his hand now, holding it in both of hers, rubbing her thumbs over his knuckles, still trembling a little. "But you must tell me all that happened. I can't get over it, seeing you here—it was a shock, seeing you on the doorstep like that. Come, sit down over here, you must tell me. . . ."

"Anya, I'm tired," he said, "I'll tell you afterwards, but I must lie down now. It's my head."

She ran then, to get his room ready. The room he had occupied before was vacant, there were still some of his books on the shelf they had put up for him. "There," she said, pulling a clean pillow-case over the top pillow, "it is yours again, for as long as you want it. You won't be disturbed here." As she went away, she heard him quietly turning the key.

She put her head inside the room on the other side of the landing. "Boris, are you ready for some good news? Andrew is back. Yes, alive, but not well, no. He looks like a ghost, like a brown ghost. But he will get better, you see."

When Andrew came down she had tea ready for him in the drawing-room. The damask curtains were drawn

half across the french windows, so that most of the room was in deep shadow. "It is really cooler here," she said, "than on the veranda." He sat in silence while she poured out his tea and set it on a stool-table beside him.

She asked: "Your head, is it better now?"

He said: "Yes, thank you. Yes, much better."

"I should have given you an aspirin," she said. "Would you like one now? It works well, taken in tea."

"No," he answered slowly. "No thank you. No, I don't take that sort of thing."

He was stirring the tea with his spoon, round and round, looking over her shoulder towards the window where, through the gap between the curtains, he could see the butterflies hovering between the antirrhinums. He said at last, still without looking at her face:

"I'm sorry, Anya, I should have warned you, I shouldn't have burst in on you like this. I didn't think. I was walking up the Skaraborg-Gatan — I think it was—and it was so hot. I felt a bit giddy and I told a man to drive me here."

"Your tea's getting cold," she said. "Drink it up, it'll do your head good."

He remembered suddenly that he should ask about Boris; he had forgotten how you behaved in private houses.

"How is Boris?" he asked. "Is he away?"

"No, he's upstairs in his room. He's better, but he doesn't come down very often now. He'll want to see you—but not till you feel quite well, I'd rather you didn't go till you're quite well."

He said: "I'm quite well now, except for this headache. There's nothing really wrong with me, only——"

He hesitated.

"Yes?"

"Only I don't sleep very well."

"Tell me what happened," she said. "Or wait, if you would rather. To-morrow, perhaps, when you've had a night's rest."

He smiled and said: "A night's rest!" Then, quickly, "There's not much to tell. It was a hopeless failure. We got near him—at least, I think so, I think we were within two or three hundred miles; if he was alive—they said at Moscow he was dead, but I'm not sure. No, I'm still not sure. What was I saying? Oh yes, we got fairly close, I think we'd have found out something at the next village. But we got tired, we thought we'd better go back. It was the purga, at least, partly. I didn't expect it like that, not so far south. It was very severe while it lasted; it left us rather played out. It was rather sickening that, wasn't it? After getting so near. All that effort wasted, a wasted life."

"Wasted life?"

He nodded. He was looking straight towards her now.

"Yes, I lost young Keel. And Guller—you remember, that hefty cockney?—he's lame for life. His own fault, partly. In the case of Keel it was mine." He spread out his hands suddenly. "And all to no good. You know—well no, you can't know what I feel like, what sort of a fool. Oh yes, they wanted to come, they knew what they were in for, at least, they thought they did. But that doesn't help my case. . . . And the whole thing was a failure, we didn't find him, we didn't——"

"—You did your best. It wasn't your fault that you failed."

He said:

"I'm not sure. It's hard, just at present, to think

quite lucidly, to see how things went. But I can see it better here, in this house. It was in this room that I had that talk with Phelhove—you remember, the night he came to dinner? I remember that conversation so clearly now, much more clearly than I can remember most of the things that have happened since. And I realize, now, that I wasn't entirely honest. I gave Phelhove the idea that I hadn't anything in my mind but reaching Franz. That wasn't true, not altogether true. I felt at the time that it wasn't quite true, but I couldn't be sure. And having said that to Phelhove I stuck to it."

"But surely, if——"

"No, listen. I want to get this off my mind. I may not get another chance. I do want to tell someone this while it's still clear. You see, this other business—it doesn't matter what—it was in my head all the time. It meant that Franz had second place. Perhaps I didn't realize that—it seemed so irrational, the idea of it—but that's how it was. So there was I, pretending to lead those four men, and half-regretting—that's what it comes to—that I'd ever started. I was a sort of Lot's wife; but I didn't get turned into a pillar of salt, I wasn't as lucky as that. I don't say I didn't do my best. But one can't expect success, attempting a job in that frame of mind. Do you see what I mean?—I've not put it very clearly, I've got out of the habit of talking. . . . I deceived those men, that's what it comes to. And one of them's dead. If I could——"

Anya said, quietly:

"I see what you mean, Andrew. You've put it quite clearly. Yes, after all, I am not a woman for nothing. What's a woman for but to understand how men feel? But listen, I mean this seriously; you've

made me your confessor, you must do what I tell you. You're wrong about the reason why you failed, about deceiving the others—probably about that boy who died, too. No, you won't believe me, not yet—I don't ask you to. But I want you to wait, to stop thinking about it, for the time being; until you're better. You're ill now—you can't deceive me, you're tired, you've overworked yourself. I remember once before, when Boris met you in Odessa—Boris told me what you were like then. It doesn't do to think over things when one's mind is tired. If only——"

"It's at night," he said. "I can't help thinking about things at night. I keep the light on sometimes, but my eyelids grow heavy, I shut my eyes, and then I see back, all over the last year, sometimes ever so clearly. It goes right back to the *Oenexia*—you know, the ship that brought us over—things I said, foolish conversations, idle thoughts. But that's nothing. Only I see this room here; vaguely, just the outline, not so clearly as I see it now; I hear that clock ticking—listen, like that—and I hear myself talking, bragging to Phelhove. Over and over again—it's so clear and loud when there's nothing else to listen to, nothing to look at. I go all over the same ground, again and again; I twist my thoughts every way, and they always bring me to the same word, written like a great electric advertisement right across the darkness in front of my eyes. *Betrayal.* And I know that I'm being punished. It sounds foolish to you, I know, but you don't know how long the night is, how quiet it is, what it feels like when your thoughts won't stop, won't grow softer, when they run over your mind all night long, like horses galloping on a frosty road. . . . But why do I load you with my idiotic trouble, as if you had no troubles?"

Mr. Phelhove was still out of town. Anya found out by telephoning to the consulate. He had overworked, they said, and was resting in the country, up at Rantavaara; no correspondence could be forwarded. He would be back, they hoped, some time next week.

Andrew waited. He had come to dread the Central Hotel, where everyone would be suspicious, where a simple question might give rise to all kinds of conjecture. Phelhove would know, if anyone did; he was methodical, that youngster, he had written the name down in his diary and promised to make inquiries.

His patience was nourished by the homely comfort which Anya gave him. He had forgotten how good it was to live in a little house, to step from his room on to a carpeted landing instead of a long, impersonal corridor, to take meals at a big table in a quiet room. The windows of his bedroom looked nearly westward, and as soon as the sun rose he could see the strip of blue water where a finger of the bay reached nearly to the foot of the pines. Before, he had almost resented this distraction. Now, though he sometimes read for half an hour in one of the books that Anya found for him—Trollope, Pierre Loti—he was glad to close them and allow his eyes to wander, to rest upon the patch of fierce blue in its frame of heavy green, to follow a white sail creeping in from the wider sea. He had sent to Vadsö for the books and manuscript he had left there, but he hardly intended to work; the effort was not worth making until his malady was over. When the hours moved past so slowly the thought of wasted time did not heavily oppress him; and he reasoned as old men reason; a little more work done, a few more shillings earned, another mile covered, did it—in the falling evening—

really matter? In the daytime there was sufficient for him to do. He would spend an hour with Boris in the morning, answering as best he could the old man's pathetic questions: Moskva, what did it look like now, was St. Basil falling into ruins? Was there really less poverty, more freedom? Had he met any men of his old regiment, and did they speak of him? "I know, I confess it, I belonged to an order of society that was selfish, rotten at the roots. But the men in my regiment, they did not hate me, no one will tell you that." He was glad when the hour was over, when Anya came with the bread-and-milk and sent him away. He sat in the veranda, then, till the bell rang for luncheon, or sometimes he would walk down to the beach and sit there among the fishing boats, throwing white pebbles at a floating cork with a child's enjoyment. In the afternoons he sat with Anya, sometimes reading to her while she sewed, glad to give her this trifling pleasure; until three o'clock came, when he would rise quietly and go to his room. Several times, as he was going, she offered to give him aspirin; but he would not take it. "I never take those things," he always said.

He would not venture into the town, even when Anya invited him to assist her shopping; but he began to go farther afield. The weather still held, but at night a sharp breeze rose from the north and in the daytime it was cool enough for walking. Anya did up a parcel of food—she was too busy and too rheumatic to go with him—and he started early, along the sandy road which climbed up through the pines to Lapinino, and down on the other side to Epsa or to Järven, where the sailing-ferry would take him across the lake to Loa. At Järven, more than once, he hired a tretsa-dinghy for an afternoon's sailing. It was a pleasant way of resting,

after the hot climb up to Lapinino, to sit gliding between sun and shadow, smelling the lake-weeds and the pines together; and in using the light winds to carry him as he wanted there was sufficient occupation to keep his mind from running on its own wilful course. When the bad hour came he would move against one of the hundred islands and lie there, with his face deep in the moss, grateful for the smell of rich earth, until the pain had passed. But he could not stay long upon an island, for he felt there, more than in any other place, the danger of an insidious loneliness. There, where the earth was so still, the trees so close a shelter against intrusion, where only the drone of mosquitoes and the faint lapping of wind-touched water broke the silence, he could fancy her with him, lying beside him in the moss; not vividly, for his memory no longer gave him her image; but as a presence grown close to him by his mind's insistent nourishing, a reality which, however far it differed from her, would attach itself to no one else but her, had no existence except in the faint memory of her face, her voice and laughter. It was unbearable, the urgency of his thoughts if he let them start in that direction. And he would get up quickly, not minding if his head still hurt him, and push the boat off and row it towards the shore; or strip and swim with fierce strokes until he was exhausted, vainly hoping to quiet his mind by the vigour of his body. Landing at the boating-station he would walk home at top speed, as if he were exercising in mid-winter, and arrive panting, with the sweat running down his chest and thighs. It might be that he would never find her. He could not endure to have the memory so close when she was still so desperately far away.

He began to hope, in those days of glowing summer,

that his fatigue and restlessness would pass away. Phelhove had not returned; the doctor at Rantavaara had advised him to prolong his holiday, he might be away another fortnight, they said. He received the news calmly. The headaches had grown a little less severe: Anya's kindness and the good, simple food she gave him were doing their work. In the daytime there was the sun shining on smooth water, the scent of the pines; the hours of darkness were still short, and in the early morning he could see, standing by the window, the day's beauty returning. In the quiet rhythm of those days his spirit found a growing tranquillity; there was no snow left upon the hills, and on the sandy paths which ran for miles through the forest he could forget the reality of rumbling cities, the clang of tramcar bells, the smell and grime of Moscow. Even the image of Keel lying down there with his head grotesquely twisted, the eyes open and staring, the lips parted in a sarcastic smile, had grown less vivid. If he despaired of getting well again, he yet considered without dread or sadness the closing of his day. He had resolved to see no doctors, since none would understand or believe in his complaint, and they would drive him on a round of weary remedies. It was happier not to struggle, to stay here, while Anya's kindness lasted, to fit his mind by usage to its new condition. He would stay, perhaps, through the winter, if Anya could be persuaded to take payment for his lodging. He would finally resign his Chair, and wait here for another summer. In the long evenings he would read to Anya in the drawing-room, he would make the night shorter by every means he could think of, by modelling or sewing, with easy books or a pack of playing-cards. It would be worth holding out, if he could resist the extreme of lethargy, to see the days

lengthen once again. The cure might come of itself, at least the weight of memory and yearning would grow less burdensome. And if, when the year had gone round, he found his reason slipping, there could be an accident—there were so many—on a day when gusty winds played roughly with the little boats riding where the lake was broadest. Before, it had not seemed possible to live a year through, to live a month, under an illness that so drained vitality, that wore so hard upon the mind's endurance. Here he discovered that his mind, when it surrendered the pleasures of its old activity, could live in convalescence upon simple apperception; on the feel of the shore-wind which rose suddenly in the evening, touching his cheek where the sun had scorched it; on the smell of breakfast coffee, the taste of herrings fresh from the morning's landing; on the clouds changing their shape as they processed across the far, grey hills. The very failure of his expedition, complete and shattering, had cleared his mind of half its burden. That was done with, Franz was dead as they had told him, there was no chance on earth to try again. There remained one vision only, fainter than the rest but more compelling, which prevented his surrender to tranquillity. It was a phantasm, he thought, unable to restrain him longer when no sense of duty bound him. He was no use to others, his brain had crumpled and without it he could do nothing; he was free, surely, to gather the contentment left him in the sunshine, in being so near to earth and water. He would escape, if summer lasted, from the pursuit of so ethereal a tyrant; it was impossible that the sorrow should linger, here where his senses were filled to overflowing, when the cause of it was so remote, so amply shielded from him, so deeply hidden in the darkening waters of his remembrance.

But the fine weather could not last much longer. He knew, as he took his boat one afternoon on a narrow tack through the neck of water joining the two great lakes, that the wind was changing. Overnight it went right round, and he could see next morning from the burgee of the yacht-club barge that it blew from the south-west. All day the clouds were gathering; on the next the sky was covered, the water in the bay had turned a drab, flecked green, the green of the forest hardened, the line of distant hills became distinct. There would be no rain, the fishermen said, while the wind blew so high; but the clouds, piling up, sank lower; and you could see that they were heavy with rain. It was chilly, after so much sunshine. Above, the wind was a force which moved the clouds steadily, but below it was moist and gusty; if you walked on the sea road, your face was moistened by the haar; inland the sand which had thickened on the roadway rose to join the fluttering paper, tramway tickets and chocolate cartons, in whirlpools reaching at times to the height of bedroom windows. It seemed as if October had come suddenly and summer was gone. The rain, the fishermen said, might come to-morrow; but not before.

Anya had bought him a light mackintosh, and he set off early, bareheaded, with the mackintosh over his arm. It had been depressing, in the night, to listen to the little noises the wind made, the creak of a swinging gate, the scratch of paper chivied along the gravel path, the faint, husky whistle from the trees. Dawn had come late, and pallidly. The early hours had been infinitely long. So long as he stayed in the house there was nothing to soothe him; the shore was deserted, with the boats hauled high on the beach; and he set himself to walk off the increasing melancholy, over twenty miles if need be.

He took the inland road, where the slopes were gentler and where, with the wind behind him, it was some enjoyment to feel it blowing on his short back hair. The road was troublesome to walk on, for the sand had moistened to become a layer of thin mud upon the surface, which grated horribly beneath his shoes; but with his long stride he made good going, and had reached the eastern end of Lake Aloen before midday. He crossed by the steam ferry, left the road before it reached Toijamso, and striking right climbed up the hillside by the toboggan run, reaching in half an hour the naked summit. From there, looking back across the tops of the pines, his view reached to the sea; and he saw that the horizon was lost already in a sheet of rain. Overhead the clouds were black with menace, beneath the trees it was as dark as evening.

He thought of going back, but the impulse to walk hard and far was still too strong. He ran down the sandy slope, catching at saplings to brake the speed of his descent, and came out suddenly upon a narrow road. To the left the road led downwards, twisted skilfully to save a sharp incline, nosing its way between the tall pines. By plunging down the banks he could have threaded the coils, but he was afraid to lose it, and he started patiently to follow its windings, hoping that ultimately it would take him towards Loa. It was a lonely road, built on a ledge so narrow that no space was found beside it for the smallest wooden villa. Except in the middle hours there was always shade on one half or the other, so high and close were the tree walls on either side: and now, beneath the awning of heavy cloud, it was ominously dark. He walked rapidly, hoping to reach some shelter before the rain started; for it could not be long now; but the windings of the

road seemed endless, and it led more easterly than he expected. There was an eerie silence, through which the wind brushed lightly on the topmost branches, and he fancied for an instant, forgetting how he had reached it, that he was on some nameless road which led for ever, falling always lower, through a forest that was boundless. It was almost frightening, the way the rain held off.

He came at last to a crossing where a stone-built posted road ran level with a tumbling stream, taking an easy course to the north-east. There was a cottage here, and he knocked at the door to ask if the road led round towards the lower lake, or if a way could be found there; but the man who answered him, a bearded peasant in his bedroom slippers, was either deaf or doited. "Ulanka!" he said, waving his stick ambiguously; nothing more. The rain began as he set off again, a few drops falling with the force of hailstones, then a sheet of water pouring vertically as if the massed clouds had been ripped across. He remembered, when he was half soaked already, to put on the mackintosh; but against that downpour it gave no more protection than a sheet of tissue paper. When he had walked a mile the rain's force had not slackened. The country had opened out, and there were fields on either side extending to half a mile before the trees began. Yet he saw nothing but the road a few feet ahead, on which the rain danced frantically, and the sheets of rain which moved now like lines of infantry, swept slantwise across the valley by the chopping wind. He walked faster, feeling a new delight at such extravagance, hardly caring where the road would take him. This was what he wanted, to walk by himself at his own hard pace, to feel against him the wind's exhilaration and

the cool purity of the flooding rain. Just to be so wet, as he had sometimes longed to be in boyhood, that was delight enough. And now he was part of the embracing storm, lost beyond finding in the drowned valley. The clouds falling had covered up the escorting hills, the nearest trees were seen dim grey like sailing ships in a mist at sea, the cities had gone and nature itself was forgotten, there was nothing but rain, and the wet road under his squelching feet.

The road rose a little, turned, and swept down to a village of white, one-storied houses. There was no-one in the street, the rain washed against latched doors and fastened windows, the brook ran on both sides of the street, and to every door there was a little bridge like a vessel's gangway. Already the brook had become a torrent, and he could fancy that when it rose in flood the houses would rise with it, casting off their moorings to float away like Noah's Arks on the surging tide. At one small window two children pressed their faces; he saw the squashed noses and the outlines of their heads against the misted glass; and he thought how gay a surprise it would be to them when their ark lifted. 'I shall see them pass,' he thought. 'I shall wave to them as they float away.' But the road led him on, and the village was lost behind him in the sweeping cloud of rain.

He had walked for forty minutes when a road gate shut against him brought back his senses. It was a level crossing, hard by a railway halt on which he read 'Ulanka.' Ulanka, he had heard the name, but it meant nothing to him. He realized then that he had come far out of his way, and saw with a moment's panic that it was nearly three. At any moment now the bad hour might begin, and he was loth to endure it on the open

road. He heard no sound of a train approaching; but when he rang the bell, marked '*Agitate if you require the doorway opened*,' there was no response from the gateman's cottage, and that might be a favourable omen. He climbed the gate and walked beside the line to the wooden shelter.

Sitting still under cover, he began to feel the misery of being so wet, and was tempted to take the road again. But he heard presently the distant hushing of an engine, and waited to see which way it came. Five minutes later it arrived, a black, tall-funnelled mastodon, tugging three coaches with a fatuous industry, whistling heroically as it shambled towards the halt. He held up his hand, and rather to his surprise it stopped. The guard leant out: "Where for?" the guard asked. "Where are you going?" "Kaustborg." "All right." He bought a ticket and climbed up to the nearest carriage, which mercifully was empty. He realized, as he banged the door, that the rain had stopped.

By the time the train reached Kaustborg the clouds had parted, showing a patch of brilliant blue; and a shaft of sunlight falling through the glass roof of the station made a yellow square on the stone platform. Standing up in the jolting carriage he had taken off his outer clothes, wrung out the water, and put them on again. He stood on the platform now with the sun falling on him, his wretchedness relieved a little by the sudden warmth; uncertain, with the crowd moving past him, what to do next. The journey had been too short, the transformation too abrupt; within an hour he had been alone in the drenched country and now, with summer returned, he was surrounded by the bustling traffic of a city. For a moment he could not remember how the change had come, but he knew by the wet

clothes clinging to his skin that it was he who had walked through the rainwashed valley, that it had been no dream. The train was going off again, back to Medsaal, and the country people returning from the market paid small attention to the drenched, dazed foreigner as they pushed towards the carriage doors. He looked at their faces as they passed, vaguely curious. There was a woman fussing with her family, another carrying a child in one arm and a live hen in the other, a party of schoolboys talking in high voices about the motor race at Kestenfors. Glancing up he saw above their heads a row of tin advertisements, a malformed boy smoking a Medeston cigarette; a woman whose neck was grimed with engine smoke, smiling her satisfaction with the toilet soap of Assioud Haran. A train at a farther platform began to draw away, and he felt as he intently watched it that the platform on which he stood was moving. The noise of the engine in its early labour drowned all the noises of the station, which was full of the smell of engines, mixed with a dirty indoor smell, the smoke of cheap cigars retained by airless carriages; there was a symphony of lubricant and sunlight, everywhere people were waving. As if his mind's chain had slipped free from the wheel which regularly moved it, he felt himself fall back to a moment he had long forgotten; and suddenly he was filled with a new sadness, a malady of spirit like the algos of a captive exile. The moment in which he lived was his no longer, it belonged to a being who had worked and slept at night like others. It had passed him once before, alive with possibility; he had let it go, and now he held an image only, the shape, the colour, the odour, but not the glowing essence. He felt—the carriages were full, but the crowd still hurried past him—that the moment now

reborn had been the starting-place, the embryo of those emotions which through all the winter's journey had held his mind in leash. There had been no chance, the train was already moving, only by an act of pure theatricality could he have changed the issue. He had said that then, he had repeated it in every mile as the train rushed north to Vadsö. He had thought his trouble would be ended by the journey, the northern voyage, the need for desperate activity to get his party landed, the stress of hunger. 'When it is over,' he had said, 'I can start again. When Franz is safe I shall be free, free to argue with my conscience, to go my own way, to strive for happiness as reason guides me. Afterwards,' he had repeated, 'when it is over.' And now he knew that time moves only forward, that the moment would not return, that the distance lost could never be recovered. 'I was alive then,' he thought, 'I could work long hours, and sleep and wake again, I could find new power in my mind for each day's labouring.' He was tired now, his thoughts ran waywardly, his mind's vision had altered. In the light of his unbroken consciousness the materials of thought and sense were bleached to monochrome. Desires moved faster than the thoughts which followed them. His spirit's energy had slackened; and in his pursuit through endless twilight of a faintly visioned happiness he knew that he could never overtake it. 'It has gone,' he thought, 'it has gone too far for me to follow.' He was standing on tiptoe, searching with his eyes above the people's heads. But he knew already that he would not see her there, only perhaps her faint translucent image, only the picture of her mournful smile.

For a moment only he stood still, while the inward face of all his life since Vadsö swept like a single beam

of consciousness across the quickened tissue of his mind; stood still, to realize the whole extent of agony, to be certain that no thought, no trick of senses could lead him further into deeper, larger pain. Then the gap was closed, the year swung round again, his wet clothes made him shiver suddenly and the shivering body reclaimed him. His eye caught the station clock: it was after four. Something had failed to happen, but he could not recollect it. He knew what he must do.

He could have reached the hotel on foot in seven minutes, but that was too long a journey for his patience. He called a taxi, murmured *Central*, and sat forward on the seat while the driver twisted deftly through the traffic. When the taxi stopped he paid it with a note for twenty, said 'All right, it doesn't matter,' and ran up the steps into the hotel. He recognized the porter who accosted him; it was the same who had been on night-duty when he was there before; a thick-necked man with a guardsman's bearing. He said, without preamble:

"A year ago, rather more, you had people here called Brissaut. I want to know what address they left. Please look it up for me."

The man was hesitant, and Andrew walked over to the reception counter, where the register lay open. Turning the leaves backwards he found that the book began in March.

"This is no good," he said. "Where's the previous register?"

The porter was nettled by his manner.

"I can't tell you that," he said. "People don't ask to see it, only the police."

"You mean you haven't got it? You've sent it away somewhere?"

"No, sir. But unless I know why . . ."

"Get me the manager! At once. At once, do you hear."

The head porter came out from his parlour.

"Sir?"

"I want to see an old register, the one covering the early months of last year. Will you get it quickly, please, I'm in a hurry."

The head porter considered. He was an old man, wrinkled by a lifetime of servility.

"Last year, you said, sir? (Odsen, you can go now, I will see you presently.) The early months? About February, or March perhaps? Now which would that be? . . ."

Andrew said: "Look. Find out. For God's sake hurry. Here, let me."

But the old man would not allow him. A finished register, it was a precious thing, a monument and diary of his labours, a volume in the history of his House. He found the one he wanted and turned the pages slowly.

"Brissaut, you said, sir? You don't know the exact date? Or the number of the room, you don't by any chance remember the number of the room? Here—no! no, that's Bjornsen. Emberg, Peploe, Lundsen, Jackington . . . Brissaut, it was you said, sir? B-R-I? This would be the one, perhaps. From Ireland. Ah yes, that would be the one, sir."

Andrew scarcely heard him. The pain had come. He stepped backwards and sat down on a basket-chair. He put his thumbs between his teeth, bent forward, pressed his elbows against his sides. His eyes were still open, he saw the head porter's immense baldness like an oval moon bobbing on yellow clouds. He heard distantly like the prayers mumbled at a graveside

the names, 'Emberg, Peploe. . . . That would be the one, sir.'

"Oh sir!" the head porter said. "Are you feeling all right, sir? Can I get you something to drink, sir? Odsen, come here. Get a drink for this gentleman, brandy, hurry! Would you like me to get a doctor, sir?"

With his lips rolling like the folds of a blanket, his jaw tight as if seized by tetanus, Andrew said: "No, don't bother. . . . What address? Did they leave an address? Tell me, what address, that's what I want."

Shaking with embarrassment, the head porter replaced his spectacles, found the name again, ran his thin middle finger along the line.

"No. No proper address. Oh yes, pardon me, yes, an address was left. Warsaw. Hotel Europejski."

¶ Anya found out for him, telephoning to Bennett's office that evening, that there was a steamer for Riga on the next day, at about noon from the south quay.

"But can you not wait a little?" she asked. "There is a Swedish gentleman, Karl Ostessen, a great friend of Boris's, who goes to Warsaw next week. You could go with him, it would be company for you, it is dull, travelling alone."

He would not wait, however. Next week, he thought, she might be farther away; he was frightened to lose the distance he had gained so tardily.

"To-morrow," he said. "Yes, I must go to-morrow. I will have a look round, and come back again perhaps if I do not find what I want."

In the early morning he dressed, slipped out of the villa, and walked into the town. The season of his spirit's restfulness was broken, and it was intolerable to keep still, imprisoned in a little room, while the hours

of summer night-time crept past him. It was light when he reached the Central, but all the streets were empty. For a time, standing on the pavement opposite and watching the silent, ugly hotel, he thought that they might have deceived him, that she might still be there, asleep, imprisoned in the room she shared with her husband. Here he could feel her spirit, and he dreaded to find himself again in the desolation of Warsaw. He did not trust them, the people in the hotel, they were hostile to him, they did not want him to know where Brissaut had taken her. He wondered, as he looked, if the hotel was real, or only a property of the fluid dream he lived in; it was so grotesquely solid, here in the still light of early morning, and in his memory it had been a shape moulded out of darkness, casting a tongue of light across the darkened street. Perhaps if he threw his weight against the portentous façade it would bend and crumple, and he would find amidst the broken match-wood only the bullnecked porter sprawling half-asleep upon a plush settee. He started to walk again, and walked till he was tired, down to the river, along to the harbour, back again. The town was waking now, and the little door into the Central was open. No one was there to guard it, and he stood inside a moment, wondering if he could ask to see the room she had slept in. But his boldness was sapped by fatigue, and he could not bear to stand in that odour, thinking of neglected opportunity. At Bennett's a woman was cleaning the windows and he asked her what time the office would open. "At half-past eight," she told him. He walked back slowly to the villa.

¶Perhaps there was more rain to come, for in the southern sky white clouds like sprawling cherubim

were drifting in a steady current, and beyond the harbour entrance the waves were big enough to set the *Phyäjokia* in a lazy roll. But on the boat-deck the high sun shone brightly, and when a tail of cloud drifted across the sun's face its shadow only swept the deck like that of a great bird swooping. With a fresh wind blowing from the islands on the starboard bow it felt like a Grecian spring.

The man in smoked glasses and a panama who had placed his chair next Andrew's introduced himself as Dr. Soderland.

"I see that you are a scholar," he said in German. "Your book, very interesting?"

Andrew, who had been reading Hildegrave's *Opinions* only with his eyes, said: "Yes, but a little heavy, the points are too much laboured. You are a doctor of medicine?" he added, upon an impulse. "Tell me, have you much acquaintance with insomnia?"

The doctor smiled.

"With insomnia? I hear of nothing else. It is the common complaint of all the elderly and middle-aged. I have a sufficiently large practice in Gothenburg, and all day long my patients are saying 'I cannot sleep, I cannot sleep at all, I have not slept for a whole fortnight, what must I do to get some sleep?' I say to them: 'How old are you, forty-four, yes? And you have been smoking tobacco since you were twenty? And you have a big meal late every night, and for exercise you go out to Alingsas in your auto and have a drink of Pilsner and drive back again, yes? Why then do you expect now to be able to sleep?'"

"You have no prescription, then?"

"I tell them they can take a malt-drink at night, they can buy a new mattress, or recite the poems of Goethe

to their wives. It does not matter. Nature withholds her gifts from those that do not live naturally."

"You don't believe, then, in insomnia as a disease, a disease that can attack a normally healthy subject."

"Ah, that would be something different. But there are not so many cases—it is called Myonov's Disease, one reads of it from time to time. But in Europe, not often; it is of Asiatic origin, Persia, Arabia, those parts. I have had only one such case in my hands, that was a Danish lady who had missioned in China. And her I could not cure. I could only send her to rest in the country, and she was dead before six months. It was a mercy, I think, for she would have lost her sanity. She could sleep only by means of drugs, and one cannot live like that."

"And insomnia was the only symptom?"

"No, there were headaches also, of a kind that made me think the disease akin to malaria. Feverish headaches, quickly over, but very severe. They came every morning, about the same time, but not so severe when the drugs had given her some sleep. It was necessary sometimes to give more drugs, morphine tablets to alleviate the pain, it was more than she could bear. And that of course did no good to her nervous system. It was a great sadness to me, a charming woman, a very noble woman, and there was nothing to be done, though I went to Paris specially to the Tropical Institute for a consultation. It was a most unhappy case, but of scientific interest. I remember that I wrote a paper on it for the Medical Society at Stockholm."

"But that was a long time ago?"

"A long time, yes, many years."

Again the deck heeled gently over to starboard, the hard shadows of the ventilators shifted, the claw of the

archipelago rose above the deck rail. It was pleasant to sit here talking, with the sun's heat tempered by the steady breeze; and easy now, when there was no dust or traffic, no smell of petrol or of forest, to resume one's former self, to talk as if the cloud of memory had passed behind, melting into liquid sky as the hazy coastline was melting. Soderland had folded a piece of newspaper about his knees and was paring the nails of his long fingers with a rounded toilet-knife, enjoying his nimble artistry. His hands were exquisite, the skin much paler than that of his face, which was naturally brown, austere, very closely shaved. The silence which had intervened was easy, Soderland patient for the Englishman to open, always careful for the sensitivity of foreigners. But Andrew was held by diffidence. By all the signs this man was eminent in his profession; it would be manner-less to pump him, yet here was an opportunity to gain some knowledge without declaring himself an invalid. He ventured at last:

"I suppose that since that time there has been some progress? It would have been a subject for research, no doubt more is known now. . . ."

"I fear, very little. It is, you see, a rarity. There is so much else to do, there is tuberculosis, there is cancer, we have not yet mastered the common diseases, there is so little time to spare for a casual enemy. In Calcutta, I believe, there has been some work done—I read of it in one of the American papers—but I have heard of no positive result. I am, perhaps, not thoroughly informed. There is so much that goes on, so much to read, so many journals, it is hard to keep pace."

"You believe, then, that the disease is still incurable?"

"To my knowledge it cannot be cured. If death does not result there must be insanity. The mind cannot

stand for long the strain of continuous awareness. I believe that it may cure itself, in certain cases. But for the doctor, there is nothing he can do; except for the drugs, and you know what that means."

"I see."

"You have some personal interest? Or may I not ask? Perhaps you have travelled in the East, have met such cases? But do not let me press you. . . ."

Andrew hesitated.

"I had a friend once, he had lived in the East a good deal, who suffered in that way. He told me that he lived in a kind of twilight. Sometimes he seemed to sleep at night, he lay down and closed his eyes and became so drowsy that it was akin to sleeping; but when he roused himself he realized that his brain had never stopped, he could trace back the whole succession of his thoughts since the previous evening, a rational succession, not the fortuitous wanderings of a dream. Then as he ruminated he could see right back to where his illness had begun, a stream of linking thoughts; no break, no break anywhere; cross-currents, other thoughts interlacing, but never a break, no intermission. It is like a candle with a green flame, standing between two mirrors in a darkened room. You see the flame repeated on both sides, a line of candles stretching. You cannot see where they end, you know that the candle will never go out. . . . That is how my friend described it. It must be curious to live like that, with no real darkness."

Soderland put the knife in his pocket, carefully folded his newspaper, placed his fingers together. Staring at his white thumb-nails he said thoughtfully :

"I am not sure if it is altogether the province of medicine. It is the greatest mistake that a doctor can make to believe himself a purveyor of health to men of

all sorts, to sick bodies and sick souls alike. You who are Shakespeare's countryman must realize that. Not that I have much to say for the psycho-analysts, they are too much the pedant and not enough the doctor. No, with such cases as the one you describe my mind travels always towards Galilee. You will remember the story. . . ."

But the Englishman had risen, murmured 'Excuse me!' and moved away. Already he was half-way across the deck; a moment later, gone.

Soderland was undisturbed by his abrupt departure. 'I am now sixty-four,' he thought, 'and at that age it is foolish to imagine that one is not a bore. The English can show the most charming manners in the world, they have in a sense the gift of manners, but there is in them a streak of quixotic honesty which makes them appear at times to be a very rude people.' Then, 'It is curious,' he reflected, 'that the patient is always ashamed of his disease. It is tiresome, it insults the intelligence of doctors, the way they will beat about the bush. It is never the one who speaks, it is always the wife of his uncle, the cousin of his friend, a business associate. . . .'

Ten minutes later he went below and found the Englishman in a corner of the empty second-class saloon, lying across a berth with his knees bent up like a man wounded in the stomach, his arm across his face.

"You are ill?" he inquired.

Andrew raised his arm for a moment; long enough to see how different Soderland looked, the sweetness of the brown eyes which the sun-glasses had hidden.

"Rather sick," he whispered. "I am a very bad sailor."

Soderland went to find his suitcase and returned with a bottle of tablets.

"Here, you must take one of these. Wait, I will get you some water."

Without moving his arm Andrew asked: "What is it, what sort of thing?"

"That doesn't matter."

"But I'd rather know."

"Laudanum. Not the best thing, but I have nothing with me more suitable."

"Thank you, thanks very much, but I won't, thank you. I don't take that sort of thing."

Soderland said: "My friend, you must do as I tell you. It is the only thing for your complaint. You can't go on like this, you will lose your sanity. I know that. I would not make you if . . ."

The Englishman had begun to cry. He was holding back his sobs, like a small boy who has fallen and cut his knee.

"I won't take it!" he repeated. "Go away please, I don't want anything. I'd rather not. Can't you go away."

At Riga, where they had berthed in the small hours, Soderland went ashore directly after breakfast. There were a dozen passengers already waiting at the customs bench while the officer fussed about a Frenchwoman's chinchilla jacket, but the Englishman was not among them, nor anywhere about the railway platform. Soderland went back to the steamer and found the second-class cabin steward.

"There was an Englishman on board," he said, "a lean, sunburnt man, in a grey suit. Can you——"

"You mean the professor, sir? Yes, Professor Wild that was, there was a lot about him in the papers. He went ashore early, sir, after staying up all night, he had to catch the early train for Vilna."

It was evening when he reached Warsaw. There had been no rain, but the heavy clouds hung low and the air was stifling. Men in the streets were holding their hats and sweating, the priests could hardly drag their heavy robes along the pavements, the old Jews packed together on the platform of a swaying tramcar rocked and gasped and mopped their foreheads. At the Europejski the sallow porter recognized and welcomed him.

"You can have the same room, sir, it is still empty, I will send your bag up straight away. There was a gentleman came to see you, not long after you had gone, an English gentleman. I could not give him your address, for you did not leave any. But he left a letter for you."

Andrew said: "All right. Yes. You can send it up to my room. I want to see an old register, about this time last year."

"And there are other letters too," the porter said, "a whole pile of them from England."

"What?" Then he remembered, he had asked Elizabeth to send on letters. "Oh yes. Yes, send those up too, send them all up to my room. But I want to see the register, an old one, about a year ago—rather more perhaps—you had people here called Brissaut. Captain and Mrs. Brissaut."

The porter hunted. It took a long time. Andrew, leaning against the desk, felt as if all his life had been spent in the restless lobbies of big hotels, waiting while porters hunted. He said at last: "Will you bring it here, please, I'd like to look myself," and immediately found the name, written across two lines, in Brissaut's striding hand. But the space for a forwarding address was empty. He went up to his room.

He would have done better, he thought, lying on his bed, to go to London with the others. He could have made inquiries, hunted army registers, tried the offices of the Danziger-Baltic Steamship Company, perhaps put a cautious notice in *The Times*. He was too tired now, for London people would know him, there might be another flare-up in the newspapers, everyone would be kind, and hopelessly unhelpful. He must go to somewhere quiet now, to Switzerland perhaps, where the sweet air and the sun shining on mountain snow would rest him. Then, if he felt better, he would go to Dublin and begin a search there. Till now he had only wasted his slender store of energy and spirit, he had followed a track which as any fool could have told him was bound to peter into wilderness. She had been here, she had lain and slept in this very building, but here he could not feel her, he had come no nearer, perhaps he had only drifted farther away.

A boy thumped the door and came in with a single letter. It was a note that Matt had written.

> 'Why, dear old thing, were you such a B.F. as not to leave your address? Your letters have been sent here, so I gather you are coming back. I shall be in Berlin till the 26th, address c/o Cooks, Unter den Linden, and I expect you to write to me there. Alphonse is in a fearful state about you. You must be short of LS. by now, so I enclose a cheque for you to get on with. Cooks round the corner will cash on presentation of your passport. Write quickly.'

The boy had hardly gone before another came with an armful of letters. "You can put them down there," Andrew said, "yes, on the floor. And now get me the largest waste-paper basket in the hotel. And some

tea; bring me a pot of tea, will you, made as strong as it can be. Oh, and one other thing, I want a lukewarm bath, you might get it ready."

He took off his clothes and walked about the room naked. 'If it goes on like this,' he thought, 'I'll finish off somehow. There's no point in going on, when I can't even breathe properly.' He bent to look at the pile of letters on the floor, stirring them with his foot. Fifty or sixty, at a guess, most of them forwarded from All Souls to Elizabeth's flat in Chelsea, and on from there. Evidently Elizabeth had had the sense to eliminate the circulars, these were nearly all three-halfpennies. The boy came back with a basket the size of a jam-pot and told him that the bath was ready. Andrew said: "I want you to take the whole of this lot away and burn them. Wait a minute. No. Leave them here, I'll decide in the morning."

In the early morning he was haunted by a dream. He was fully conscious of his whereabouts, of the feeling of the sheet beneath his bare skin; he knew that when he opened his eyes he would see the ugly room, the table with the hotel letter-paper, the suitcase lying open; but the presence of his dream, Keel's presence, hovered about him, Keel was speaking all the time, reproaching him. It was not easy to get up, for his limbs were tired; but when he had sponged his face and chest he felt less drowsy. He sat by the window, looking down into the courtyard. Not less than fifty feet, he guessed it was. There was nothing to read except the letters, and he began to open them. There might, after all, be obligations which he should fulfil before he moved any further.

There were pages and pages from Elizabeth, news of all their relations, stage gossip; too much for him to

read at present; he would masticate it in the train, if he went any farther. There was a letter from Nasington about the Worcester property; one from Layson Brown —the new book on Shintoist Ethics had enjoyed a *succès d'estime* in America, and was selling as well as might be expected; a long letter from Pearson at Oxford, another from Lewis Birrie. He began instinctively to sort the letters, separating the business from the private ones, the ones that should be answered from those that might be read again and then destroyed; occasionally reading one right through. The oldest was dated only a few months back, yet they had the flavour of a vanished epoch; the persons had lost a little of their reality, the scenes the letters conjured were like the scenes of childhood watched distantly from the harder ground of middle age, recalled surprisingly by the faint and sickly smell of jasmine, by the noise of a mason's hammer on a summer day; the faces were fainter, more tender, like the faces in ageing portraits. He could almost have begun to write: 'In sorting the correspondence of the late Andrew Wild, for whose estate I am sole executor, I find a number of letters headed with your address; and I write to ask if you would wish me . . .'

The rain had begun, not heavily, but in a steady drizzle, a veil of tattered silk to hide the entrance of the sun. The paving of the courtyard was uniformly wet already, the air which came in was fresh and easier to breathe. For a long time he stood at the open window, glad to abandon the task of reading, content to watch the rare colour of rain falling through the pale light of earliest morning, to inhale its coolness. 'I shall leave the rest,' he thought, 'I shall tie them in a parcel and ask Elizabeth to deal with them.'

But his mind ran painfully; and half in self-protection,

half mechanically, he began to read again, picking the letters at random, sometimes hardly troubling to collect their meaning. It was frightening, that he had left so many threads of his life unknotted, that so many friendships had been half-forgotten. Some of the writers he had never heard of, German scholars who asked for his opinion, clergymen writing of dreary lives in provincial suburbs, a lady in Philadelphia brusquely demanding his autograph and picture. Then a curiosity, a letter written in an artist's hand on a tradesman's invoice:

'Dear Professor Wild: I don't expect you remember me but you asked me to write in the note you sent to me and my husband. I was just wondering if you were ever likely to be about here. I know you are always travelling an awful lot. It would be so nice to see you if you wouldn't mind going a bit out of your way, I mean if you were round here sometime. . . .'

He placed it face downwards on the miscellaneous pile, and saw as he did so the writing on the other side. His eyes caught the words.

'. . . Sandy and me. But I can't help wishing sometimes we were back in Ireland or in Spain. It's so fearfully hot here, and when Sandy goes out it's rather lonely.'

His eye dropped to the bottom of the paper.

'Yours v. sincerely, Greta Brissaut.'

He took the letter over to the electric light, which was still burning, and examined it closely. He felt the paper, running his finger along the edge. He went to look at his own face in the mirror. But still he could not be certain.

Laughing, he rang the bell. The corridor maid, having struggled into her clothes, arrived five minutes later, and stood in the doorway blinking at him, openly yawning.

"Is it a fire?" she said dully. And then, realizing that the foreigner was stark naked, "Wait, I'll go and get the night-porter."

He called her back.

"Come here! Can you read? I want you to read this to me."

Nervously she came back into the room.

"Yes, I can read," she said, and took the letter. She retreated towards the door and turned her back. "No, I can't read this, it's in a foreign language."

"Turn it over," he commanded, "look at the name at the end, spell that out to me."

Laboriously she did so: "G-R-E——"

"Yes, that's all right," he said. "Now turn it over again, read the address at the top, yes, just tell me the letters."

She spelt out to him: "Anjlotny. Novy Mshana Gast 47."

"You're certain of that?" he asked. He was laughing. "That's a good girl. That's quite all right. Give me the letter back, please. There's some money on the table there, you can take that; there's about ten zlotys, I think; yes, you can take that. What time is it? And now, can you get me a time table?"

From Opev the steam tram went all along the western shore of the lake; mostly on the old carriage road, at times taking a line of its own through a tunnel piercing an elbow of granite or along a narrow causeway built with boulders wedged into the gaps of an outer granite shelf. Between Zistchen and Chmesiez, where the road deviated half a mile inland, the tramway still followed the lake, supported against the cliff's side by a pile of bricks—not one too many—which rose from the lake's bed. Here, if the driver had rounded the shoulder a little too rapidly, the wheels had but a foot to travel between the outer rail and the embankment edge before the tram toppled sixty feet into the water; but so far it had not happened, and Iteth Opoulonis, who in his youth had built the line with shrewdness and economy, believed in this his eightieth year that it would last his time. The tram halted at every village, and considering the gradients it surmounted was punctual enough. Five o'clock was its time to arrive on the quay at Anjlotny, and it would be there most days by twenty past. From the tower of St. Estenia you could follow its wriggling passage by the plume of smoke for half an hour before it came.

Mechanically, for the tram's arrival was as regular a feature in her mind's routine as the call of the goat-meat vendor at eleven, Lsesta Ogrosyts went up the outside staircase at ten to five to see about the washing. Her line went right across the Novy Mshana Gast, sloping

down, for greater length, to the top window of a narrow house on the other side, two doors and twenty feet below. To-day there was not much drying, two night-gowns of her own, the enormous underpants of Gosow, a vest or two; but as the tram went down the street its funnel would pass a bare two feet below a yellow shirt of Gosow's, and Gosow, who had a funeral to attend to-morrow, would be furious if the shirt were not ready. From the roof she could see through a gap in the jungle of slate and chimneys a cloud of smoke spreading. That might be from Sulborz' brewery, but it was better to be on the safe side. Leaning over the parapet she called: "Greta Bressitz!"

In the street below a Syrian traveller was trying to turn his big, shabby Chrysler where the space between the houses was only a yard greater than the length of his wheelbase. Sweating, but with stoic patience, he shifted a few inches back or forwards at every move, dragging his wheel to one lock and then the other, slipping his fierce clutch against a tearing engine, avoiding by inches on the backward jump the bow of a fishing-boat which negligently protruded from a doorway. As far as the next twist the traffic was at a standstill, and a flock of goats, driven near to madness by the continuous shrill blast of a taxi-horn behind them, were pressed so close against the car that two had their hoofs upon the footboard. A policeman in white flannel trousers, betruncheoning impartially the rumps of goats and the Chrysler, blew with mournful patience upon his whistle.

"Greta Bressitz!" Lsesta called again. "Come, my darling, my little bitch, come and loosen your end, I want to take the line in." The child was surely deaf, Lsesta thought; or else in one of her day dreams: a moony young woman, unpractical, foreign in her ways.

"Greta Bressitz! Hurry, will you, I can't wait here all day."

The traveller had got round at last, and was ploughing his way through the herd, leaving the street filled with the stench of his exhaust. The uproar gradually subsided, and Lsesta's shrill voice began to command the air. "Greta!" There she was at last, leaning out of the window, blinking at the sloped sunlight. "Loose the end, will you, I want to get the line in. Don't let the end go." The girl had been asleep, perhaps; there was no knowing what time of day a creature like that would take a nap. She looked half-asleep now, and what a time it was taking her to loose the line. "Hurry!" Lsesta called, "I can hear the tram coming."

Floppy, Lsesta thought, as she hauled the line sailor-fashion, stopping to unpeg each garment as it came and lay it across the parapet; floppy and pasty. She herself weighed well over a hundred kilos, had done for years, but she didn't flop like that, she had bought a good pair of corsets twelve years before and she tucked everything in. "You want a pair of corsets, that's what you want," she shouted as the thought went past her. And such a skin the creature had, yellow and pudgy. Didn't eat enough green food, she dared say. Some said the town was unhealthy, with the stink that came up from the lake all day and the slops that instead of running down the gutter in the street found their way through devious channels to the yards behind the houses. But Lsesta was healthy enough, and she'd lived in Anjlotny all her life, born in the yellow house farther up the street; and her face was like a geranium. Besides, if the girl and her foreign husband didn't like the town there was no need for them to stay. Still, it did make you want to cry sometimes, the way the child looked, like little Esther

before they took her off to the infirmary and finished her. Or was it Maria who had looked like that? There, the shirt was safely landed, that was a great relief.

"Where's that man of yours?" she shouted. "You want to keep your eye on him, it doesn't do you any good his being out all day and half the night, you don't know half what goes on. And don't you believe what he tells you."

The foreign young woman, smiling in the vague way she had, making no reply, looked as if she were going. She was beginning to pull down the window.

"And where were you before dinner?" Lsesta demanded. "I came over to ask a can of milk, and I didn't see a sign of you. And there was a man hanging about wanting to see you. Do you hear me? There was a man, I say, a foreigner, a Turk most likely, asking where you were. What? Why don't you listen, I can't speak any clearer. He asked me where you were, 'Does Mrs. Bressitz live here?' he said. I told him I couldn't say where you were. What? Yes, a foreigner, that's what I said. What? Well, how should I know?"

She gathered the clothes over her left arm and prepared to go down. It was a waste of time talking to a woman so deaf that she didn't seem to hear half what you said. But an idea occurred to her and she went back to the parapet.

"Here! listen. I'll tell you what he wanted. Sewing-machines, most likely, he wanted to sell you a sewing-machine, that's what he was after. I had a man come round after that, a great handsome fellow, not long after I was wed. And he got fifty oltsen out of me, do you hear that, fifty oltsen he got, and no sewing machine did I ever get from him. And d'you know what I did get from that fellow? A pair of twins, that was what I

got. And Gosow thought they were his, praise God, or there'd have been a whole earthquake. He's never found out, not till this day. So take you warning."

It occurred to her as she was again preparing to go down that this girl, who though a decent creature was a foreigner, might not be safe to trust with such a confidence. And once more she returned to the parapet.

"Here! Open the window again. Now see, don't go telling Gosow what I've just told you. Or anyone else, see, there's nothing but gossips in this town." The foreign girl did not appear to understand. "If you tell any mortal soul," Lsesta screamed, "I'll come over and drag your tongue out by its roots. Swear you'll tell nobody! Do you hear me? Swear by the Mother of God in Heaven you'll not tell any mortal soul alive that the twins weren't Gosow's! Swear it, or I'll . . ."

The tram had arrived at last. With its whistle-valve wide open and the steam-brake screaming against the hinder wheels it lurched round the corner and rolled on towards the quay.

¶ Laughing, Greta shut the window. It was impossible even tête-à-tête to make out as much as half what Lsesta said, her speech was so rapid and so voluble. The men as a rule were easy to understand, now that much of the idiom was familiar; they spoke slowly, with a regular lilt, making the 'tch' sound with a visible movement of the tongue, springing the lips wide; they lingered on the final consonants. The women appeared to speak a different language. Well, if Lsesta had anything of real importance to say she would repeat it often enough in the next few days for the meaning to come through; there would be opportunity, for Lsesta was gregarious and lived as much in her neighbours' houses as her own.

Something about a man coming, a foreigner, asking for her, trying to sell some kind of machine. That was interesting—though Lsesta might well have confused the story or be simply lying. There were pedlars all day long mounting or descending the Novy Mshana Gast, Turks and Armenians, Greeks and Poles, even at times Chinese, who arrived by the tram and went on to Henizv by the steamer, who killed the time of waiting by gossiping with the idler women and selling them perhaps a piece of amber or a holy fragment torn from the Sacred Robe. But why then should Lsesta, who at least knew a dull story from a good one, talk of this visitor as if he were outside the ordinary routine, as a phenomenon to be seen and noted? Could she have meant . . . But that was a risky speculation. For weeks she had prayed each night and morning, 'Let there be a letter for me to-morrow, let him just answer my letter, surely it can't be wrong, Oh God, to want an answer to my letter.' But nothing had come, and that was surely God's answer: that she was to forget about the professor and his kind eyes, about how kind he had been to her on the *Oenexia*; her job, he had plainly told her, was to do what she could to make Sandy comfortable in this goddam stinkhole, to give him the things he liked, to keep him out of trouble. For a whole month now, in obedience to God's will, she had never once inquired at the Post Office. If she allowed her thoughts to race again in that direction her power of obedience would be weakened. Besides, if Lsesta had really . . . but then, why had Lsesta . . . ?

Five o'clock it must be, or nearly—the tram was never much before. And if Sandy caught the earlier steamer he would be in by half-past, and as like as not would want his meal straight away. She began to tidy

the bedroom, which had not been touched all day; she had been across with Razel Estochin, whose baby had diphtheria, and had clean forgotten about it. Now, since she was here . . . It was an awkward room, the side walls were not parallel, the ceiling sloped down to chin-height at the window, the double-bed—God only knew how they had got it in—filled three-quarters of the whole floor space; and unless you kept the window shut tight all day, with a towel shoved in where the bottom wouldn't quite go down, there was always a layer of dust over everything. There was one cupboard, which leant forward so that the door fell open when you raised the catch; but it didn't hold much, and they still kept their things mostly in their travelling boxes. 'It'll do for the time being,' Sandy always said, 'I wouldn't live for ever in a place like this, but at present there's nothing better for any reasonable money. And what does it matter the bedroom being cramped when it's used for nothing much but sleeping?' But he hated it when he couldn't find his ties and things, and the Armenian doctor had gone on about it, having no room to work when she was having Desmond, it was no place for a woman of breeding, the doctor had said. . . . The meal was more important, but as she was up here she might just as well tidy, it wouldn't take five minutes. She began to pull the bedclothes straight, squeezing up on one side and then on the other, stopping to clean Sandy's razor, which was lying caked with hair and lather on the bolster.

The veal which the old man in the market had said was quite fresh yesterday was at stinking point already, and Sandy would hate it even if she covered the taste with garlic and vinegar and stuff. But down on the Stetesta she might be able to get some dazers left unsold

from this morning's catch, and Sandy liked those if he didn't have them too often. There was time just to run down there, and if Sandy came by the early steamer she might meet him, and on the way down she might just ask Maria Gorielz if she knew anything about the man who had called about a machine he wanted to sell; there could be no harm in just asking that. Leaving the bed, she went down to the front ground-floor room and half laid the table. There were two flies and a beetle in the milk, and she rescued them gingerly with the bread knife, but they seemed to be quite half-drowned and after a moment's hesitation she stamped on them. Really there were more flies every day, all the flies in the world had gathered for a grand conference and summer gala in Anjlotny. She took a basket and set off for the quay.

Perhaps, she thought, picking her way between the dung pats which covered the cobbles, Sandy would come back this evening and say it was all over, the Baron wouldn't part with his land and the deal was off. That would make Sandy wild, but it was worth a whole week of sulks if it meant there was no use staying in Anjlotny any longer and they needn't have anything more to do with the repulsive Kapadoulos, and they could go somewhere in the real country or at any rate where there weren't so many flies. Of course they wouldn't go back home yet, Sandy had had the Dublin papers sent out and the police still wanted to have him in court, Sandy's lawyers were going to clear up all the misunderstanding in the end but it took a lot of time to get all the papers together. But they might go a bit nearer home than they were now, somewhere where no one could possibly know them, perhaps some quiet place in the country, a white farmhouse like the one that Señora

Manuendo lived in at Ribuesca, or even a clean little town house like the ones in the new suburb outside Warsaw. There couldn't, surely, be anywhere else where there were quite so many flies as they had in Anjlotny, or where the smell brought up your food every other day. But it would be nice, before she went away, to find out who it was that had called about some machine he wanted to sell, and whether he were still in Anjlotny.

"No," she said, "that was the price this morning, the ones that size, Razel Estochin told me. They're not fresh now, I could smell them all the way down the Novy Mshana Gast, and the flies have eaten most of them, they're not worth half that now. It's no good your arguing because I can't understand half what you say when you talk at that rate. I'll give you eighty-five cintas for the whole lot of them."

And here was the steamer already, rounding the Castle Head. She might as well wait to see if Sandy was there.

The steamer reversed its paddles, thrashing the water into a white fury, and the timber quay shook as the fenders crashed against it. The half-naked longshoreman gave another tug on the mooring-line, negligently hitched it, and ran out the gangway. The passengers—a fat man in a turban smoking a cigar, a group of quarry-workers from Henizv, a seller of vegetables and a woman or two—struggled for precedence with a couple of goats and a very lively sow. No Sandy. Greta asked the swineherd, whom she knew slightly, if he had seen Sandy anywhere in Henizv, whether by any chance Sandy had given him a message for her. The man said politely No, but would she care to buy the sow, which was in pig and due for delivery quite

shortly, and of most amiable disposition? Greta said that she had not thought of buying quite so large a sow, and followed the crowd of passengers plodding slowly up into the town.

The next steamer was due at half-past seven, and if Sandy wasn't on that one it would mean he was staying the night at Henizv, as he had come to do so frequently. In any case there was no need for any hurry now. Her head was swimming a little after the heat and smell of the quay, and she would lie down for half an hour. She went into the back room, which was the coolest when the stove was not on, and lay down on the cooking trestle. She remembered, lying there, that she had forgotten to have any dinner. She was hungry, with nothing but breakfast inside her, but it wasn't worth bothering now. She would wait and have the meal with Sandy.

The door did not quite shut; it had never been right since April, when the rain had fallen without stopping for a whole week and the water had run into all the houses; and from the outer room a single shaft of light sloped across the uneven flags, hard marked against the surrounding darkness, for the window gave on to an area which trapped only the midday light. She had left the front door open, and the noises of the street were clearly audible, the wheels of the psaska wagons dragged slowly by bullocks yoked in tandem, the continuous scream of children; but the sound had first to penetrate and fill the outer room, and here it entered less raucously, confined and flattened, like a choir's voice trapped in the soundbox of a gramophone. She could have thought here, if there had been a smell of flowers, that she was in the shuttered bedroom of Señora de Gallegos at Ribuesca, where the stifled noises of the

Via Calderón were the only reminder that siesta was over and that outside the world was not so still, so restful; where between the other sounds she could hear faintly the notes of the Señora's mandoline, where at four o'clock the Señora would come up and call her to cakes and coffee. It was curious to her that time as remote as that, when she had been a child, dependent, with no thought of Sandy or of Desmond, would show so clearly in the semi-darkness, would portray itself with so much more reality than the exciting things between, the regatta at Kaustborg where she had first seen Sandy tipsy, the taxi-smash at Warsaw when Desmond had nearly been killed inside her. Lying quite still, alone, she could be herself, could contemplate her own existence, could lose the very name of Greta, which was only a label for what she carried about, for the stumpy Englishwoman plodding up the Novy Mshana Gast, the silent girl that Sandy slept with, the person who for six short weeks had clumsily looked after Desmond. Here, as the continuous noises from outside lost their reality, as she was separated from the day's confusion, her spirit grew taller than the ponderous figure of Greta. Conscious, now, of her mysterious identity with the child lying in a darkened bedroom at Ribuesca, of the continuity of life in her which held together while she went about with Sandy, while her body carried Desmond, while she lay twisting under the gentle hands and serious eyes of the Armenian doctor, she felt that she had escaped for an hour from a haunting stage piece in which she acted badly, had poorly learnt her part. And doubted, in the pleasure of tranquillity, if she could stir herself to take it up again.

The sweat was drying on her skin, cooling her body. The table was hard and cool. In the street the noises

had grown quieter, and she was conscious more acutely now of the high drone of flies.

She had learnt at last that it was planned for her to be alone, separate like the blinded and the deaf. Sister Anna, in the Convent of Our Lady of the Bleeding Heart, had said that she was never lonely, that the wounded Jesus was always close beside her. But He would not walk so close to Greta, who was rough in heart and manners, too hardened for His tenderness except in nights of sorrow. She had believed that marriage made her one with Sandy, that in a larger spirit her own would be enclosed and sheltered, that he would take her as he had taken her body, would lovingly disclose her dearest, loneliest thoughts. He had but to ask her for the self she cherished, to ask and listen while she unfolded to him the dreams of Ribuesca, the relics of her childhood, the strange and wistful thoughts which crossed her mind's reflecting surface like the sails of tiny fishing boats that day disclosed upon the water of the lake. In a little while, she had thought, when our home is settled and we are quiet in the evenings, we shall come closer to each other, our spirits will be joined together and our loneliness be over. Against that time she had guarded jealously her thoughts and friendships, had feared lest any intercourse with man or woman should take from her a part of what she kept for Sandy. During the long illness, lying in the hot room upstairs, she had changed her hopes and fixed them upon Desmond, confident that he, a very part of her, must grow to share her being that would not rest alone. That had turned out to be a fresh blind alley. And now that Sandy's head was full of planning—he could not rest, poor darling, while the most important strip of land was still unpurchased—they grew each

day so fortressed by their separate thoughts that it was hardly possible they should learn to know each other. If they could get away—but that hope dwindled. She had not realized as a child how hard it was to find companionship, how closely two could share the materials of living without the joining of their lives. She had badgered him to take a boat one evening, to sail her till the shore was out of sight. Then, if a mist had risen to shut them off from all intrusion, if they sat close and listened to the whispering water, they might come back to where they had been at Loard's, he might again be ready to accept her. But he had been too busy or too distracted, he had no love, he said, for sailing. The vision grew fainter, she could no longer see him in the boat beside her, quiet, her head against his shoulder, as they had been that night at Shallytoun. In the darkness which her mind would conjure, the faint sound of water, the feeling of someone close beside her, it was another voice she heard, another face she dimly saw. That voice, she thought in bitterness, had taught her to be lonely, had by its very accent shown what kind of refuge loneliness might hope for. She could have fallen back upon her independence, have boasted to herself of being grown and married, have been content with the pride there was in owning such a husband, had not the voice so fixed itself within her memory. It was not true that a spirit must rest alone, was larger by itself, might in its own maturing find contentment. The smell of country roadways after rain, the shade of giant beeches, the wind that came across the Castle Head at sunset, these things were empty when you could not share them; beauty was but a cause for longing, experience had no meaning while she was yet alone.

Someone had been arrested, or a child knocked over, all the women in the street were screaming together. But the noise died and left a lull behind it. The light was changing already to the colour of evening; Greta lay still and slipped into a trough of silence. She had become unconscious of the street, of the hard table beneath her, when the quickfire of female voices mingled with the odd reality of her surface dream, lifting her slowly into new awareness. There were women in the room outside, the voice of Maria Gorietz distinct among them. She lay in silence, hoping that they would go away, but presently Maria began to call her, "Greta Bressitz! Greta Bressitz! Are you there?" and she was driven at last to answer, "I'm resting in here. I'm ill. Please go away."

"I want to speak to you," Maria persisted.

She answered wearily: "If you've brought the bread I lent you, please put it on the table. There's some paper there you can cover it with. I can't see you now."

"There's someone here to see you, a man to see you." That was Lsesta Ogrosyts, a voice grown rough with minding children. "I told you there was a man came to see you, he's come back again."

"Tell him," Greta said, "that I don't want a machine, I don't want any kind of machine."

But already her curiosity had returned, and in an instant she was at the door, blinking at the bold light.

Maria Gorietz launched into an explanation. "We told him we'd seen you go in, but we didn't know if you'd gone out again. Lsesta Ogrosyts said you might be in the top room, but I thought you might have gone out again. I told him I'd see if you were in. He said he'd been here this morning, and I said you were out

then, I told him you'd been with Razel Estochin. I said I didn't know but what you'd have caught what Razel Estochin's baby has. I didn't know if you were in or if you'd gone out again. . . ."

The man was standing in the doorway, the light behind him. He was not properly shaved, there were whiskers and a beard beginning. But almost at once she recognized him. She thought in a single moment: how little he has altered, how curiously real he is, and yet how badly I remembered what he looked like.

She said to the women: "Thank you, that is all right, this gentleman is English, he is a friend of mine."

Addressing Andrew she changed to German, forgetting that a farther language would be clear to him. "Will you come in, please, yes, please come in."

The women lingered and she could think of nothing more to say. Maria was still explaining, "We didn't know who he was, we couldn't understand half what he said. . . ." until in desperation Greta asked her, "Did you hear there was a boat overturned, and three boys drowned out of it? Yes, I saw the bodies on the quay. No, none of them looked like one of yours, Maria Gorietz, and I don't think any were Lsesta's. . . ." When they had scuttled away, she said to Andrew, "Won't you sit down? That's Sandy's chair, it's quite comfortable. Wait, I'll put a kettle on, I've got some tea somewhere, you'd like some tea?"

When she came back from the kitchen he was sitting forward in Sandy's chair, his elbows on his knees, his forehead resting on his hands. He said, looking up:

"I got your letter. You remember, you asked me to come and see you."

She said: "Yes, yes, I remember. It was a long time ago——"

"But I only got it last week—a day or two ago, I'm not sure exactly. You see, I was travelling, I've been out of touch."

"Of course, yes," she answered. "I remember, it was in the papers, when we were at Kaustborg. You were going into the forest, after butterflies. . . . But I didn't think you'd really come, I only——"

"Then you didn't mean that——"

"Oh yes, I wanted you to come. We never said good-bye properly. I looked for you on the ship—you left a note for me—but I don't suppose you remember."

He said: "I remember quite clearly. And then I saw you at the station, that day."

"Yes, yes, I went to see you off, to say good-bye. But there was such a crowd, all those students."

Without a warning the memory came before her all alive, the crowd getting in her way, his face seen for a moment, the train gathering speed, the end of the rear coach with its look of desperate finality; and simultaneously there came the upward, stifling motion in her breast, squeezing all the moisture of her body into her eyes and nostrils, closing the passage of her throat. She tried to say something ordinary, and managed 'The kettle, I think——' before she was forced to turn and hide herself in the kitchen.

It was easy to spend ten minutes making tea, opening a tin of milk, preparing a tray. She washed and dried her face, and found that she could speak again quite easily.

"I've got some dazers," she said, putting down the tray. "Would you like some, they wouldn't take long? I got them for Sandy, but he's had them twice this week. Sure? I'm sorry everything's so dirty, it's the dust in this place, and we're covered with bugs all the time.

Sandy doesn't mind them as a rule, but they get into everything."

He asked her: "Where is Sandy?"

"He's over the other side. At Henizv. He's always there nowadays, he's trying to get some land."

He took the tea that she poured out for him, but he would not eat anything. "I had a meal at the hotel," he told her, "I'm not really hungry."

"You look tired," she said.

He answered "Yes I am, terribly. But that doesn't matter."

"I remember you telling me that night when it was foggy, how you tried to keep awake when you felt sleepy. Do you still do that?"

He said: "No, I don't need to do that now. I keep awake all right." Then, "I didn't think you'd remember all that nonsense. I talked a lot of rubbish that night. You see, I'm not used to conversation, I don't know many women."

"But I thought it was interesting. You see, I'd been reading——"

He said: "It's curious, I'd forgotten what you looked like. I couldn't picture your face at all. And it came back the moment I saw you."

"But I've changed, haven't I?" she said. "I was ill, you know, it took me some time to get used to this place. There's some sort of bug which gets you when you first come, and I had a baby that died, I was rotten for a long time. Sandy calls me the Wreck of the Hesperus now."

He said: "You're exactly as I first saw you."

"Oh—I'm glad——"

"I've been ill too," he said. "At least, not really ill, a kind of illness. I get bad nights, I don't sleep.

It makes you feel curious in the daytime. I thought that if——"

"It was awfully nice of you," she said, "to come all this way. I can't remember what I said in my letter——"

But she remembered, she could see the paper now.

"You said you were lonely."

"I am sometimes. But you get used to it. It was strange being here, I couldn't speak the language at all, only German, and hardly anyone knows that. I was rather frightened to begin with."

"But now——"

"You get used to it," she repeated.

The light was on his face now, and she could see how tired he was. His movements were slow, he watched her steadily with his tired eyes as if it were an effort to shift his gaze, as if there was something in her face that he did not wholly understand. For a moment it reminded her of Desmond, the mysterious quietude of his scrutiny, his eyes content to rest upon her face. It seemed to her then that their companionship had been unbroken, that their intimacy had grown through all the months of separation, that their shyness was nothing but a film across the face of their understanding. She said:

"I'm afraid it was a bother to come all this way. You look so tired, it's awful being in a train so long."

"It seemed long," he answered slowly. "I don't know now how long it really was. I was awake all the way, you see; the trains shook so that I couldn't read, I hadn't anything to do but count the minutes passing till we got to the next place. You see, I was frightened all the time that you'd have gone away. I didn't find you at Warsaw, and I thought you might have gone on from here too. That's the bad thing about trains,

you can't make them hurry. I kept on thinking 'She can't be waiting there all this time, she must be packing up and going.' Do you know that sort of feeling? No, of course, you wouldn't understand, it's a kind of illness that's got into me. And I think I knew that you'd been ill, I was afraid that when I got here they would tell me—but I can't explain that, it's difficult to explain the way your thoughts go in a train when you haven't been asleep for a long time. I was so tired, you see, in the train before I saw you, and I thought that if you'd gone away, somewhere much farther, I wouldn't be able to follow. I thought I should be too tired. It's difficult sometimes, when you haven't slept at all, to do the ordinary things you have to on a journey, to buy tickets, to get into the right train."

"It was awfully nice of you," she said, "to come so far to see me."

He smiled.

"I shouldn't have told you all that about the journey. But it's so long since I had anyone to talk to, anyone who'd listen, there's been no one since Anya. I've always remembered, you see, how patiently you listened to me on the *Oenexia*. You know what selfish creatures men are, they always look for someone who will listen. But I didn't mean to tell you all that, I'd rather hear what you've been doing. Only I don't want to be inquisitive. I didn't come to bother you with questions, I only came because you said you were lonely. I thought perhaps that you—that you and Sandy and I could have a holiday. It would be a change, it would do you good after your illness. And you see, I can't do any work at present, my brain won't settle down to anything. I thought perhaps we might all have a holiday. I was thinking about that in the train. I got your letter

in Warsaw, and I started off to see you, and I thought in the train: perhaps we could all have a holiday."

She said: "That would be lovely. But I don't know, we must ask Sandy. Sandy's so awfully busy."

With startling energy he said:

"You ought to have a holiday. You can't go on as you are, in a place like this. It's too hot and smelly, this town I mean, you can't go on living in a place like this. You've been ill, you must have a holiday."

She was rather frightened. "I'll ask Sandy," she repeated. "I'd like to awfully, but I don't think Sandy would. You must let me ask him, I'll see what he says. Only don't——"

That was Sandy's laugh, she recognized it when he was still thirty yards down the street. Yes, it was a quarter to eight, she was surprised to find it was as late as that. She said:

"Here's Sandy now."

With a double movement, as he entered, Captain Brissaut swept off his panama and wiped the sweat from his forehead with the back of his hand. "Have you the tea ready, darlin'?" he shouted, "we're as dry as the desert. Will you come right in, you two, there's no need for ceremony." Removing their hats most ceremoniously his two companions came just inside the door. Greta said: "We've got a visitor, you remember——"

Turning he saw Andrew standing by the table. The men in the doorway shuttered most of the light. He said, confusedly:

"I'm pleased to—I don't think I've had the pleasure——"

Greta thought how hot he looked. He wouldn't be in too good a temper, she thought. But in a moment he was smiling.

"But of course I remember! Why, it's the Professor, why, Professor, I hadn't forgotten you at all. But what a surprise, you turning up on the edge of nowhere like this. Here, come in you two, this is an old friend of mine. Professor, I don't think you've met Mr. Kapadoulos. And Mr. Jdethis—that's a name I never can pronounce yet. The professor'll be able to talk to you in your own lingo, Kapa, he reads Homer every night for the amusement, just like you or I would read the Bible. Darlin', will you put some tea on for all of us. Sit down, Professor, make yourself comfortable. Death-egg can't talk a word of any known language, but Kapa here'll tell you a dirty tale in any tongue you know. Ah, you've had some tea. Now tell me how——"

"I've got some dazers, Sandy. Would you like——?"

"Dazers? It's always dazers. . . . How many have you got? But my darlin' girl, that's no good for four hungry fellows, how could you think——?"

"But I beg to say," Mr. Kapadoulos interrupted, "I would say that I am not for the least hungry. Oh my hat, not at all."

He was a man on the small side, beautifully made, who contrived to look out of place in Anjlotny. His grey clothes were dusty now, and they were cheap clothes, but they fitted him well, and he wore them easily. His tie matched the handkerchief in his breast pocket; he wore a rectangular wrist watch on a broad silver bracelet; his pointed shoes, though they were covered with white dust, were still vaguely metropolitan. His sparse moustache was cut high from the mouth, there was a touch of rouge on his lips, and when he smiled, as he did often, you saw the gold stopping on his teeth. All the movements of his pointed hands suggested an expert dealer of cards.

"And you?" he asked Jdethis, "are you hungry?"

Jdethis looked up at him, round and smiling.

"I am famished," he said.

"Mr. Jdethis says he is not for the least hungry either."

Greta said, "I'll put on the dazers."

She felt that from loyalty she should have stayed with Andrew and Sandy; Andrew might say something queer, and there'd be a rumpus between them before you could say knife; but apart from the practical question —it was no easy task to rake out from a shelf of souring foodstuffs enough to give four men a meal—she was too embarrassed and bewildered to stay in their company. Sandy would have to manage, find chairs for them somehow, mingle the heterogeneous elements. In all her life she had never been hostess at a party; it was a promise Sandy had kept too faithfully—'You shan't ever have to manage a party, darlin', not if you don't want to, it's mud to me, all that poodlefakin', people eating your food and going home and talking scandal about you.' And now, such a party!

Hard enough, she thought, patiently holding a third match over the stove-wick, without Jdethis and Kapa: to sort things out, to talk to Sandy about a holiday, to see they didn't quarrel. It was too bad of Sandy bringing those men like this, he could at least have sent a message over by someone on the steamer. But how well he managed them all. When the stove was going she dodged to and fro between the rooms, changing the stained cloth for the clean one she had reserved for Sunday, rinsing out the teapot, setting the table, flying across to Razel Estochin's house by a back route to borrow crockery; and each time she darted into the front room, to lay the plates or a couple of extra knives,

Sandy was talking, standing against the wall with his coat open and his hands in his trouser pockets and talking nineteen to the dozen, scattering his jokes all round the audience, salting his English with a sprinkle of German when his tongue could find the phrases, delighted with himself and with his company. Kapa and Jdethis, seated on the floor together and smoking their little cigars, both were laughing, already so much at their ease that they didn't notice Greta coming and going, only Andrew rose to hold the door for her. Who in the world but Sandy, she thought as she rushed back to the kitchen, could so easily command such a party at such short notice? What an aristocrat he looked, in his dirty suit with his shirt open and his hair all tousled, talking to that dandy little devil Kapa and the repulsive Jdethis. How the room, with its damp-stained walls, its junkety fixings and its cracked, dirty ceiling, lost half the squalor when Sandy's personality filled it, when his air of boisterous ownership transformed it to the panelled gunroom of a Kerry castle. People and places, they made no difference to Sandy, he bewitched them all with his easy manners and his buoyant friendliness. He could be dull enough when he pleased, bored and sulky; but not in company, he never let her down when there were other people present, he was always at his best when there were men to talk to, always made her proud of his looks and geniality. He was talking to Andrew now, as she came in again with Razel's dahlias in a jam-jar, poking fun at him about the expedition after butterflies. Perhaps he had not quite succeeded in drawing Andrew within the circle of his humour, Andrew was so tired after the long journey, so different from the other two. Perhaps Andrew was just waiting his chance to broach this question of a holiday, he didn't seem quite to hear

what Sandy was saying, he was smiling faintly but his eyes wandered, he said hardly anything. There were too many people in that small room, she thought, with Sandy and Andrew together. She went back to the kitchen, and still the dazers weren't done properly. There's no room, she thought, not in the same place, for Andrew and Sandy.

"I'll give this much for the place," Sandy was saying, "a man can move about without a lot of formality, like you can in my own country. At Warsaw it was nothing but rules and regulations, filling up forms all day long and reporting to the constabulary. They're a suspicious lot, the Poles are. If a man can't——"

She had got the bedroom chair down, and the dazers were brown at last. It didn't look quite like dinner at Loard's, but it was not too bad a scramble-up for the occasion. She said:

"It's all ready, Sandy."

"I say if a man can't walk home at ten o'clock—what d'you say, darlin'? It's all ready is it, that's splendid. But darlin', there's not enough fish there for two hungry men, let alone the four of us. See here now, we'll go the whole lot of us up to Groensen's outfit and try for a bit of supper there. He'll at least have something better to drink than this tea that tastes like Gregory's Powder. How'll that suit you, Kapa?"

Kapadoulos, smiling, said: "Zure! that's a good fine idea Sandy, I'll say. Thank you."

"As I was saying, a man ought to be able to go about in any country, so long as he behaves in a lawful manner, without the police writing down every time he has to turn aside for the purposes of nature . . . will you lead the way, Professor, you're the oldest and wisest of us, except for Death-egg perhaps, and with him there's

no telling . . . you don't need to change your frock, darlin', you look just fine in what you're standing up in . . . ah, you're staying at Groensen's, are you, Professor? You'll know the way there without my telling you. . . . I mean to say, if a man's got his passport it means he's a reasonably decent-livin' citizen of his own country. . . ."

A feast for the eyes of Maria and Lsesta, they moved in a body up the Novy Mshana Gast and through the gateway, followed by inquisitive dogs and children; crossed the triangular market-place, where the vegetable stalls were still doing a lively business, and passed between the scattered tables, the potted shrubs and the brass spittoons, into the dining-parlour of Groensen's Inn.

¶It was cooler to dine inside, Sandy said, as one who knew about such matters. Certainly it was quieter; for the dogs wandering in the market-place were thirsty and quarrelsome, the children of Anjlotny who never went to bed chased each other screaming round the fruit-stalls, substantial artisans passing to and fro on their two-stroke cycles worked their shrill horns incessantly to clear a way between the chattering groups in the narrow roadway. But the dining-parlour, into which the sun had blazed all through the afternoon, retained within its walls the stifling heat of the day, and the breeze which brushed the tables outside, lifting and scattering the beer-chits among the dust and rubbish of the market, would hardly penetrate beyond the doorway. Round the dozen sticky papers on which so many had miserably perished the flies in their hundreds buzzed defiantly.

Groensen himself pushed the chairs towards the table and recited the day's menu. That was all he had, he said, if they didn't like that they could go somewhere else, only there wasn't anywhere else in Anjlotny. "It's

the drink that matters most," Sandy said. "What about it, Professor, a Zinza to wet your whistle? That all right for you, Kapa? Death-egg, Zinza? You, darlin'? No? Three Zinzas, Groensen, and get a move on, will you—tell him to hurry, Kapa." Kapadoulos was being exceedingly polite to Greta; he had dusted her chair with his handkerchief before she sat down and now he wiped each utensil as it was placed before her, cursing the carelessness of a waiter who allowed his cigarette ash to fall upon her dress. Andrew alone was not smoking. Jdethis, so practical was he in the management of his cigar, retained it in one corner even while he scoured his gums with a table-fork, and without the application of his fingers shifted it to scour the other side. The Zinzas came and almost immediately were repeated. White with rebellion, for he had hoped this evening to join his lover in Bakesti's dancing-parlour, the little under-waiter jerked five plates of rhubarb purée on the table. The men with one accord took off their jackets. Sandy ordered three more Zinzas.

"Yes—it's buying land, that's what keeps me busy," he said to Andrew, dropping the end of his cigarette into the purée, "it's a habit there is with me, I can't resist buying land wherever I go to."

Andrew said: "Indeed, is that so?"

He was aware of Groensen behind him, stooping to speak in his ear in loud and careful German: "Are you paying for all this, Herr Wild? I won't serve another drink more unless I know that someone's going to pay me." He answered softly: "Wie? Ich weiss nicht. Also gut, ich werde doch bezahlen. . . . Well, yes, I suppose there is a fascination in that kind of ownership." He was looking at Greta, thinking, 'Yes, that is Greta herself, her own lovely body, sitting only four

feet away from me,' but she was gravely talking to Kapadoulos and would not look in his direction. 'How white her face is!' he thought, 'it is as if she were living in some cold country.'

". . . in the family. My people 've always been buying land, and farming it and selling it, generation after generation. There was a time, not above fifty years gone, when you couldn't find sixty acres together of Kerry land but what a Brissaut or a Durrie had a dozen of them. But the property's all passed away now, it's in Columbia and Alberta that my brothers have their holdings, and the black sheep of the family just picks it up where he can and sells it again between his soldiering and his knocking round places. . . . Go on, Kapa, you order for yourself and Death-egg, drink what you want to. . . . Y'know, it's a kind of madness in the blood that gets a hold of a man when he sees fine land being wasted. Why, I can tell almost by the smell of it when I see a piece of ground that's useful for wheat growing, being used maybe for a herd of goats to scrabble over it, and I have the feeling I just can't rest till I see a fine team of punches ripping it up to show the richness. Why, when I . . ."

"But I think," Kapadoulos interrupted—he had been listening with half an ear to Sandy all the time—"there will not be so much a horse-team ploughing up the Baron's land if he sells it as a steam-shovel, oh my hat no."

Sandy flashed upon him a look of fury.

"I wasn't particularizing," he said shortly, "there's lots of uses you can put a good bit of land to."

"But that is only my fun-joke," Kapadoulos pursued, "because the Baron will not sell at all, nothing will persuade him, he is very obstinate."

It appeared that Jdethis had grasped the way the talk was going. He was glistening with excitement, his big lips were rolling up towards articulation. At last the words came out; "He sell, Baron sell, yes, I tell you a' right. Hayricks, all fire, one, next one, all nights. Barns, all fire. No good. Baron sell, sure."

"I don't know what he's trying to say," Sandy said crossly. "Give him another drink, Kapa, tell him to keep his sweaty tongue away from a fine civilized language he can't make head nor tail of . . . Professor, you're not drinking anything. Now let me order you some Pilsener, they have that here, and it's easier to drink than the wine they have, which they bring from Stamboul in old tar-barrels. Groensen! Come here, you old philanderer, bring me a bottle of Pilsner. Here Kapa, have a cigarette, give Death-egg one, it'll stop him talking."

The soup plates had been taken away and replaced by a round of dazers done in vinegar and garnished with strips of Spanish onion. Unbidden, the under-waiter brought five huge tumblers filled to the brim with Votsasurq, the wine of the House, a watery claret laced with a tablespoon of brandy. With a tumbler that looked the same Groensen came and stood by the table with his hand on Sandy's shoulder, sipping and smoking, listening with an air of impartial judgment to the conversation. His wife appeared presently and took her place beside him, linking her arm in his, smiling at Kapadoulos when in staccato bursts of Psetisny he shot good-humoured pleasantries upon her size and contours. "L'pevz! L'pevz!" she squeaked, shaking her cigarette and archly toasting him with her husband's glass. Jdethis grinned with immense enjoyment, he liked a buxom woman and he found Kapadoulos incomparably

witty. It was a great evening for him, so much good company and such excellent fare, he felt friendly even towards the taciturn foreigner who sat on his left hand. Having made one speech and a mild sensation he ceased to address the company at large, and confined his remarks to Kapadoulos, whom he addressed in a lilting whisper from one corner of his mouth. He was saying the same few sentences again and again, and gradually Andrew became conscious of their meaning. 'Five hundred oltsen, that's what I'm to have in any case, and twice that if the Baron sells . . . five hundred I say, that's what you promised, five hundred in any case . . . it's difficult nowadays to get men who'll set fire to things, it's difficult I tell you, I've had to work like a trooper . . . five hundred oltsen, I want to see the first half before to-morrow night, you must get hold of it to-morrow . . . five hundred in any case, and twice that if the Baron sells to the Englisher. . . .' Kapadoulos took hardly any notice. He said sharply, from time to time, 'L'pevz ioäton! ist 'afda sumzien, na'a, ptethita!' and went on talking to Greta. Still grinning, Jdethis continued his querulous monologue unabated, like a man talking to himself. Neither looked at the other, there was no sign upon their faces of the subterranean conflict. "Pilsner!" Sandy shouted. "Here, waiter, bring some Pilsner, five glasses, six, one for Groensen and his old Dutch, the Votsasurq's not fit for pigs to wallow in."

Outside, the mosquitoes had become unbearable, and one by one the drinkers came within, ranging themselves about the poloton tables or along the wine-counter, their debilitated wolf-dogs crouching at their feet. Heedless of the waiter's veto a wrinkled Transylvania gipsy squeezed through the doorway, and having set

his zither upon the drinking-bench began to pick a wailing harmony. The lamps were lighted now, and to all the other odours was joined the pungent smell of kerosene. Across the doorway the waiters tightly fastened the mosquito curtain, the heavy air within the parlour revolved more slowly, settled to stagnancy. "Vodqua!" Sandy roared, "is there no vodqua in this damned doss-house? There's not a thing but vodqua fit to drink in this damned country. Groensen, here's a cigar for you, tell your old woman to go and get some vodqua." He was superbly happy. He had got himself into a good sweat now and it made him cooler, he had forgotten all the worry about the land. Land-buying, what did it matter when you could enjoy yourself of an evening with fine amusing company? The professor, he wasn't liking it any too well, he was a bit too hoity-toity, too well accustomed to the panelled college messes where you put on a white shirt every night to have your dinner. Well, that was his funeral, he could like it or not. And Greta was looking like a damned stuffed parrot, not saying a thing to Kapa who was trying so hard to amuse her. She was still fretting, he guessed, about that baby, she'd get over that as time went on. Lost all her looks, he thought. But it was a good thing to have a woman at a party like this, it gave variety, and just look how Kapa was liking it; he'd better not like it too much, or he'd find out what happened when a damned dago got messing about with a white man's woman. He didn't know what a lady was, Kapa didn't, and by god she was a lady, you could see she was a lady in spite of her looking all white and puffy like that, and that yellow frock the girl would insist on wearing. She was a lady and they knew it, everyone in Anjlotny knew it, Kapa knew it, even Death-

egg knew it, though neither one nor t'other had ever met a lady in his life before. And weren't they happy now, after quarrelling over money all day long, Death-egg and Kapa. It was a damned infernal noise that the blasted gipsy was making, but it kept things going, a bit of music like that helped to make things hum; music, and men all talking together in a language he couldn't make head nor tail of, and the air all thick with tobacco smoke, that was the kind of evening he liked, the kind of thing he was used to, the only thing that made him feel really restful. He was getting rather sleepy now, it was stuffy in this damned parlour, the drink that Groensen kept did nothing to you but make you sleepy. Still, he'd done his part and things were going all right now, Groensen was giving a song in his queer cracked voice and everyone was joining in, Kapa was doing magnificent, he was getting more witty every minute, and Death-egg was grinning all over, enjoying himself fit to burst. If only the professor would drink a bit more vodqua he'd enjoy himself like the rest of them. He said, leaning over: "You know, Professor, in a place like this, hearing all this foreign talk, I get desperately homesick. You may think that queer, a man like me, but it gives you a lonely feeling, with the dear green hills such miles and miles away. We fellows in the war, we felt like that sometimes, ploddin' about in the trenches. I'd have given half the money I owned sometimes to be riding on a tramcar down the streets of Dublin. Will you not have another thimble of vodqua? Or would you give us a song now, I remember that you have a fine manly voice? No? Well, it's a poor stomach that never rejoices. D'you think my wife's looking as pretty as she used to? She was a pretty young woman, you know, the time when I married her,

but she's been fretting about the baby she lost, I had the best doctor in the place to it, but he couldn't do a thing right, that fellow, he had no manner of skill with children. D'you like Kapa, over there? He's not a bad sort when you get to know him, not half as much a foreigner as he looks. And the little round fellow, he's a willing sort of old fellow, do anything for you. But you feel homesick at times, with nothing but foreigners all round, there's times when I'd give all the money I possess to be strolling in the sweet lanes of County Kerry." The gipsy had been stirred to liveliness, someone had found a fiddle and was leading him into rhapsody, the men's voices fell and their feet began to tap on the wooden floor, their finger nails against the glasses. Except for the movement of their feet the men were still, their faces taut with rising emotion, their dark eyes glistening as their faces turned towards the players. Jdethis drank off the rest of his vodqua, hiccoughed, smacked his lips, and held out his glass for more. But nothing happened, the waiters leant back against the wine counter, oblivious of everything but the throbbing music. Kapadoulos turned his head and spat across his shoulder. He did not care for this peasant stuff, that gipsy would never have been allowed in a café of Athens or Stamboul. He asked: "You like this kind of thing Frau Sandy, you like it Mr. Professor? Good fine music I say, you think so?" But no one answered him. The bearded drovers on the elders' bench were nodding to the lilting music, the lovers entwined in the darkest corner had come forward arm in arm to listen, Olga Groensen with her arm round Greta's shoulder, her cigar end glowing at her very lips, swayed her heavy shoulders and gigantic bosom as the music swayed her impressionable soul. "It no longer matters,"

Gosow Ogrosyts whispered to the waiter, "that everybody in the town is starving." A glass of wine knocked over rolled back and forth upon its side, the wine trickled across the counter and down on to the floor. As if to reach its climax before the steaming air had burst the walls asunder, the music rose, moved faster.

¶She was there, only four feet away. But he could not touch her, could not speak to her, her eyes avoided his. Through the journey from Warsaw, sitting upright in the darkness in the hard, swaying carriage, watching the empty stations go past, watching the daylight come, the green country rolling by, he had said, again and again: If I see her, it will be enough. Through the journey he had read nothing, had eaten little, had hardly spoken to a fellow-passenger. He had only prayed, clenching his hands in his pockets, that he might find her there when he arrived, that he might see her. It cannot be wrong, he had thought, to want to see her. If I can see her, that will be enough. He had doubted, praying, if God would grant so great a miracle. She had escaped him twice, she would have gone on from Anjlotny, there would be an empty house, a blank space in a register and a foolish porter who could not tell him where she had gone. God had not willed that he should find Franz Grundmann, how could He will that he should find the object of so personal, so selfish a desire? But he had seen her, he had spoken to her, she was close to him now. At first he had been unable to realize her identity with the spirit which had followed him, had lived within him, in the months gone past. She had become to him a being unapproachable, a person high above him who could only smile with her eyes towards him from the higher world in which she lived. It had

been too strange to find her spirit incarnate, to hear her speak as another being would speak to him, to know that time and distance had been swept away. And still the mystery of her presence overawed him, as if he walked alone, barefooted, in a holy city, whose minarets his dreams had painted and whose gracious houses cast on him at last their gentle shade. He had not asked to find her lovely or that she should treat him as a friend. But she had talked to him, and he could watch her now, marvelling at the beauty of her hair whose very colour he had forgotten, and think how her lips had moved, how gentle her voice had been.

Only that they could be alone together, that the noise should suddenly be hushed, the other faces melt away.

He had reached Anjlotny only on that morning, the rumble of the train was still in his ears and forehead. The bad hour had been worse that day, fierce enough to hold him tied against his impatience, and his head ached still with its aftermath. He was tired, so dull with tiredness that he could not realize how sleep would yet elude him. The heat and foulness of the air were suffocating, in all the confusion of voices he could hear distinctly only the sibilant murmur of Jdethis, the lecherous voice of Kapadoulos. Brissaut was saying something, trying to make him drink the filthy compound of inferior schnapps and hollands that was dignified as vodqua. In the flickering light of the kerosene lamps everything was dancing. Greta sat there. Greta sat, with her grave eyes turned towards Kapadoulos, listening with a mechanical smile to his febrile inanities. She was real, so real that if the magic had not held him he could have stretched and touched her; but the rest was phantasmagoria, a power of evil personified to separate her presence. It was hard to bear, that such a panoply

of noise and odour should clothe the sacredness of this, his magic evening. He thought, 'I am like the bridegroom at a wedding feast, to whom the faces are but masks, the rejoicing meaningless. Only the bride does not belong to me, our meeting is no marriage, the marriage is long over and I am but a spectator at her wedding.'

He had been alone with her. But I was not prepared, he thought, I imagined that my heart would tell me what to say, that my voice would come easily, the strength of my emotion give it utterance. The time had passed. He did not know how long they had been alone, but it seemed as if they had only passed each other in the street, that the crowd immediately had come between. Now, in this high confusion, they were lost and driven apart. He had seen their meeting as the climax of experience, the close of time. Now the moment had passed and time went forward; but not for long. I have filled (he thought) the time allotted me, already the shadows have grown long. The extra strength vouchsafed to carry him to their reunion was now all but exhausted. He had withstood the journey. His life might last, his eyes might see another summer; but already the darkness was closing on his mind.

I have seen her face, he thought, her body is close to me. But the thankfulness he strove to feel was swallowed in the ache of his impatience: that this should be the night of their reunion; that, when they might have shared the stillness of the lake, the scented air of closing summer, they should be prisoned from each other by the noisy crowd. Her eyes were turned away; since the meal began she had hardly looked towards his face. And yet, he thought, her spirit is close to mine. If, for another moment, they could be alone together, their eyes would join and he would be content.

The light was dimmer; or else his vision was fatigued, for he saw no longer clearly the outlines of the room. The faces of the men were blurred, the fiddler's arm was fluttering like a blue-fly's wing. Her dear face was receding, while the sweating face of Kapadoulos stood close before his own. He turned to Brissaut, whose arm was linked with Olga Groensen's as they drank to toast each other, and saw his features magnified to sheer absurdity. And then quite close, quite clearly, he saw a wine glass rolling on its side, the red wine trickling. "I think I must go," he whispered. "I'm tired, I'm not much use at such a party." But Brissaut did not hear him, and he wondered now if he would ever get away, if this were a purgatory designed to hold him until he should repent of having loved her. "I'm sorry," he said, "to be so dull when you're so kind to me." But Brissaut made no answer.

If he were dreaming it meant that sleep had come. But if she were in a dream then she would vanish when his eyelids lifted and the room, the little room in Anya's house at Kaustborg, broke in upon him. The dread that he might lose her stirred him, and he stretched his hand to grasp some object on the table. He held it, but unsatisfied he leant towards her, put out his hand to touch her. And his fingers touched the arm of Kapadoulos. Something was strange in the noise that filled his eardrums, for though its volume had increased he heard it deafly, as if his ears were stoppered. Yet the little voice of Jdethis came to him quite clearly, he heard the words though he no longer synthesized their meaning: 'five hundred oltsen, at least five hundred oltsen.' It was the kind of voice, he thought, one heard in dreams. He spoke himself, but his voice was faint with tiredness and no one seemed to hear him.

'It has come,' he thought, 'God has given me my moment and now the darkness has come.' He saw a waiter standing a long way off, and beckoned to him; but the man, if he saw, paid no attention. The light was brighter now and all the figures sharply outlined, the men against the poloton tables, the musicians playing. The figures danced before him, they rose and fell as the smoke cloud drifted upward, they were round and solid with the weird reality of waxwork. It was not possible that he could find himself so incongruously surrounded, it must be that he was still upon the journey.

And yet, he thought, I cannot be asleep, for sleep was taken from me.

The music fell, the tap of feet upon the flags grew louder, and all the noise that filled the parlour came to his ears as distantly as if he stood outside the threshold of the room. A match was struck, a man whose glass was empty reached for the bottle. The feet were tapping, tapping, but save for the beat of feet there was no movement and no one changed his place. He could not tell how long the meal had lasted, how long it was since the waiter had lit the lamps. His time moved slowly, and it seemed as if they were yet at the beginning, that the men would stand or sprawl till morning, would stay for ever if the music held. In a former life he had been content to watch her; but then they had been alone. He could see that she was tired, her eyelids drooped, her head was heavy on her elbows. Jdethis was fast asleep, the Greek was yawning. But Brissaut sat up, immense in bulk and stature, whispering his jokes to Groensen, untiringly the master of the feast. It would go on, so long as he desired it. And it seemed to Andrew that the rest were lifeless, automatons who tapped their feet and nodded as he wished them, that he himself was

there for Brissaut's pleasure. He would not mind if Brissaut would let her go. She was too frail to answer his wild humour, her lips were silent but he knew she suffered.

His senses had reached stillness, his thoughts were quiet and bare. Only there grew in him an anger against Brissaut, that he should keep them prisoner on the night when he had found her. 'I am unjust,' he thought, 'he has welcomed and entertained me. I am an interloper who has given nothing to the evening's gaiety.' A memory of the *Oenexia*, of Brissaut disappearing in a lighted doorway, had so constrained his judgment that he could not like him. Yet that, he knew, was a narrow opinion, for the man was brave and masculine, easy of speech and splendid in his features, whose overflowing friendliness excluded no one from its reach; a man of simplicity, in a world where too few were simple. 'He is my friend,' he thought: and yet, to have spoilt this hour, that was a damage he could not forgive.

Brissaut was quietly talking in his richly coloured voice. ". . . a cluster of white cottages in a cup of the hills, where the hills come sweeping down all green to the Atlantic . . . there was not a place in the world that my mother loved as well as that one. . . ." He did not know what Brissaut was saying, was only aware of his melodious speech, of the face, still handsome despite the dirt and sweat-streaks, bent weirdly close to his. The nearness frightened him, he found at once that all his sight was filled with Brissaut, as if he gazed from the bottom of a narrow pit and Brissaut's face peered down. But the sudden fear gave way to coolness, and he saw as he had never done the easiness of action. The man was unprepared, his neck was not too large to be enclosed in two hand-spans. He was

Greta's husband, but he did not care for her, he could not even see that she was tired. The dizzy room was crowded, but the men were drunk with music, no one would notice, and to-morrow the chance would be gone. His eye was still on Brissaut's face, he nodded politely, but on the rim of vision he could see the rest, Jdethis still fast asleep, Kapadoulos blinking. If he acted swiftly no one would ever notice, and then, before the darkness closed on him, they two could be alone. Holding the table-edge he joggled back his chair. "One minute," he said, "keep still a minute," and rose to his feet.

On the climax of crescendo the music stopped. Before the noise of voices started there was a gap of silence, in which the snores of Jdethis rumbled like a feline curse. The forks and glasses on the table tinkled, the table shook, so that Andrew felt its violence in his hand. He drew his hand away, the table ceased to shake, and he saw, looking down, that his hand still wildly trembled. He was aware that eyes were turned in his direction, he thought that Kapadoulos sneered.

"I'm afraid I must go," he said. "I'm very tired, I don't sleep well, I'm very tired now. I'm afraid I must go to bed."

He did not look at Greta, but she saw how pale he was. The door that led to the stairway closed, and the music started again.

¶From his bedroom window he could see right over the town to where the lake reflected its scanty lights, to the riding lights of the luggers at anchor beyond the quay. It was cool up here, and the breeze which caught his face, which passed like cool and slender fingers through his hair, came straight from the surface of the

lake, untainted by the odour of the streets. Still leaning against the rail of the balcony he took off his tie and collar, slipped his arms in turn from the sleeves of his jacket, undid the buttons of his shirt. Against his sweating chest the breeze was blessedly cooling. His arm had ceased to tremble.

The thrum of music, the slither of strings and rhythmic tap of wooden soles on stone, still reached him faintly from below. The murky light of the parlour, webbed by embroidered curtains, fell far across the market-place, blotched with the husky shadows of the chairs and tables stacked against the trellis. Beyond the watch-gate hung a single lamp, and in the widening beam that pierced the archway the Watch stood at his ease, his musket slung, his meerschaum glowing. But the market-place was empty, and beyond, the town lay asleep.

With the calm and the night's coolness a part of his fatigue was lifted; he knew that his drowsiness had been a mere illusion, that sleep had come no nearer. He stared across the lake to where, in the farthest distance, a prick of light marked Henizv. There was yet no sign of the coming day.

'I will get a boat,' he thought, 'directly morning comes, and sail across the lake.'

His limbs were tired. He moved the trestle-bed against the window and lay upon it with his head propped on a suitcase, that the breeze might catch his face. The candle flickered in the draught, making the shadows of the bed, the single chair, the washing-stool, dance feverishly on the baroque and brilliant papers with which the walls were patched. He closed his eyes, and at once saw Brissaut's face.

Not Greta's. The room as it was faintly mirrored

in his eyes grew clearer, he could see the face of Kapadoulos, the glow of Groensen's wife's cigar, the clouding smoke and a line of bearded faces, the thrust of the fiddler's arm. The bed shook slightly with the trembling of the music, but for the coolness he could fancy he was there again. But her place was empty, save for the faint reflection of her yellow dress. Her face had altogether gone. 'I must go back,' he thought, 'it was wrong to leave her there.' But his reason stayed him, he knew she would be lost to him again in that hot confusion.

'If I could sleep, in sleep her spirit would join me. In sleep we could be alone together where the air is cool and quiet, we could cross the lake and pass into the forest, where the trees stand back to leave an avenue, where the ground is a mattress of fern-moss, where the sunlight quivers through the leaves and the air is filled with the scent of moss and beeches.'

But the vision remained a panorama. He could feel the things which pressed against his body, the snap-catch of the suitcase touching the hair on his neck, the window frame on which his right foot rested. He had left the door half-open, and a smell of kitchen, of garlic and of gravy cooled to jelly, came faintly up the stairs. The dining-parlour had gone now, but the little room in which he lay was present to all his senses while his eyes held shut; wherever his fancy wandered he was still within himself, his consciousness remained acute, unsparing. His mind was not lulled to rest by the throb of distant music, he felt it like the pulsing of a dental nerve.

'The art of sleep,' Beroïtus had written, 'lies only in the power to relax. Withdraw thyself, yield up the cares of spirit, let every corporal fragment be separate and at rest. Forget thyself, think not of appetite or

striving, or even of the gods. Be silent and submissive, yield, sink thyself. The gods will bear thee into their oblivion when thou hast yielded to their will.'

But he could not yield, for his consciousness was like a rope that held him, that stayed him poised above the depths of Lethe; and as if the eyelids of his mind were fastened open he watched eternally the process of his thoughts. In the day his sense was dulled, he moved like a stranger among men who had slept and risen fresh. The night was his own detested kingdom, a span of life through which he passed again like a soul translated, a familiar realm where drowsy thoughts grew lively to torment him. He had spent the night before —how long ago that was—sitting upright in the train. He had said 'There can be no other night like this, if only I can see her. If I am but near to her I shall be happy, the hours however slow can never be too long.' But now his memory had lost her features, this night was like the others he had traversed. He had forgotten what the night was like, the loneliness, the sense that all the world but him was sleeping, the terrifying emptiness of darkened streets. He had forgotten how slowly time moved in the feeble light of lamps, in the narrow compass of a bedroom. And suffering now the familiar agony, the drag of harnessed time that moved to the measurement of little noises, he found her magic lost its power to relieve him. She is like a flower, he thought, whose scent the memory cannot recover. I thought, when I tasted it again, I should remember always. But the scent has gone, only the desire to taste it has grown beyond all bearing.

The music sank as if the players were lowered to a deeper room, the tap of feet continued, he could hear, though faintly, the murmur of men's voices.

He pushed the suitcase to the floor and let his head sink on the underquilt. He stopped his ears, but the music ran upon its own momentum. He tried to fancy that his head was falling back, lower, right down, oblivion. *Be silent and submissive, yield, sink thyself.* But a place on his elbow itched where a carriage-bug had stung him, he would hear the drone of a mosquito somewhere inside the room, a tickling rustle where the wind played with some plaster which had fallen loose into the drain. His eyes opened once again, he saw the room as if it travelled on mudcaked wheels towards the morning. He caught the pillow and held it tight against his face, till his tears and dribble soaked it.

Sleep, oh God! oh God, give me sleep!

¶ The washing-stool was not high enough to write on, but with the suitcase perched on top it made an adequate desk: he could write in most conditions. He sat on the edge of the bed, the candle standing on the chair. He had a dozen sheets of paper pilfered from the Europejski.

An hour had passed and there was still no daylight. Starting upon an impulse, compound of restlessness and desperation, he wrote at speed with a curious fluency. He had written no letter like this before, but the ground he covered had become familiar; unconsciously, for his brain was practised in arrangement, he had the matter sorted in the closets of his mind. The sense of his power dwindling gave his pencil urgency. 'To-morrow,' he thought, 'I may find that I cannot control my hand.'

'I want to explain'—he wrote—'why I have behaved so queerly, for you must have found it strange that I should come so far to see you, and then have nothing sensible to say.

'You must know, first of all, that I have suffered from a kind of illness, which makes me feel like one who has been a long time in prison or who has lain for many months in a single room, and has come to feel apart from other people. Perhaps lower than other people, unable to share their ordinary amusements, infected by the experience through which he has passed. I went from Kaustborg on an expedition. It was unsuccessful, because my mind was diverted into other channels. I had not the singleness of purpose which is necessary to bring such an affair to success. The failure has meant a great deal to me, for I risked other men's lives and lost one of them. It's hard, you know, to forgive yourself for that sort of failure. You try to think of other things, but the knowledge of what you have done is underneath your other thoughts, you are longing all the time to stand still and worry about your failure, but however much you do worry you can't make the facts look any better. Then there's another trouble of mine, I don't sleep properly. You remember my telling you, don't you, how sleep was a nuisance. It interfered with my work, I had a sort of struggle with it all the time. Well, it's different now, because I've had to give up working, you can't concentrate when you're worrying, and when you're not working you want to sleep as much as you can. It's funny, isn't it, the way things go like that. I only tell you this so that you will understand why I was so silly this evening, when your husband was kind enough to entertain me. I didn't mean to be unfriendly, only I felt so fearfully tired. You get so fearfully tired when you don't sleep properly.

'But I didn't mean to tell you about all that

—you must think me a very boring and egocentric person, and when I'm quite well I'm not really as bad as that. The thing I want to tell you is why I came to see you.

'Will you be patient while I go back a little? It's so fearfully important to me that I should tell you this, I want to make it clear, I want to get it out of my own mind. When I was a young man—when I was still an undergraduate—I decided that I would never marry. Of course a lot of boys make that decision, especially if their first love has come to an end that shocks them. But it wasn't quite like that with me, because I had no first love, my early love went into other channels. No, I made my decision for two reasons. First of all because I thought that marriage would hinder me from doing the work I wanted to. You see, God had given me a very good brain. I don't mean that I was clever, that I could create things, or come near to the fine intellectual achievement of engineers and architects and poets and dressmakers. But I could always remember things quite easily, and I was able to put the things I remembered side by side and make them into books, to be useful for other people. It's important, that kind of donkey-work, it clears the ground for people who really can build giant and lovely towers when the bricks are ready to hand, it means that they can make their progress faster. I didn't want anything to hinder me in the work I saw I could do, and I knew that marriage would tie me. But I think the other reason was just as strong: I always had the feeling that marriage was a kind of conquest, in which the woman becomes the slave of the man who marries her. I know you will say that that idea is naïve and foolish

and among my dearest friends there have always been men whose husbandship was beautiful and gentle. I have known men, too, who were in every sense the bondservants of their wives. But an idea like that is difficult to get rid of, and in Eastern countries, where I have been a good deal since my earliest days, there was enough material to encourage that singular hypothesis. That was some years ago, you must remember, and even in England the position of married women was different then, especially among the poorer people. You can call it a "complex" if you like—I believe that that is the dreadful word which people use to-day for that kind of prejudice. But it was genuine enough in me. I knew, moreover, that if I married, my work would still be the most important thing to me, that my wife's interests would have to come second, she would have to follow me where I went and endure all kind of discomfort for my sake. And I didn't want any woman to be let in for that, that didn't seem to me the life for which any human being was created.

'So I set myself against "falling in love," as they say, and I was quite successful, as I often am in things to which I set my mind. I didn't meet women very much, at least, not many of the type that a staid and strait-laced don is likely to fall in love with. Except other dons' wives, and with them I was always fully occupied in being lively enough to meet their arguments—I regarded them as being exactly like my colleagues only more aggressive and less scrupulous. I used to meet women on steamships, but they were mostly grouped with men who had common interests, they were all a family which spreads itself between Simla and the *Moldavia* and Lausanne and Cheltenham.

There were my sister's friends, but they were either actresses whom I regarded simply as artists or political agitators who frightened me out of my wits. So you see, it wasn't very hard, with my work and with moving about all the time, to keep my celibacy secure against temptation. I was frightened of the women I admired, and if I found myself looking too hard at a girl who was pretty I just ran away. You will hardly believe that there are young men like that, but you don't know what donnish seriousness can be.

'At any rate, when I was past forty I thought I was fairly safe. I began to think that I could look at any woman, however pretty, without starting to "fall in love."

'But you see, I'd been so careful with myself that I hadn't realized what love really was, I hadn't even got the least idea of what beauty in a woman could be. And then I found myself suddenly plunged into it, and I didn't understand what had happened. It's rather hard to find a comparison. But can you imagine a person who's never seen a garden, and who's always heard people talking about gardens, and has got so tired of their chatter that he makes up his mind to keep right away from them. Then one day he finds himself in a garden, and wanders about in it all day, all by himself, just gazing and gazing in a foolish way at the flowers, too much astonished and overwhelmed with the miracle to say anything. And then it suddenly dawns on him that this is what everybody was talking about when they talked about "gardens." And he thinks how incredibly foolish it is to use such a dull, Teutonic sort of word for such an ecstasy of beauty. And finally he begins to wonder whether anyone else has ever really seen a garden at

all, if they haven't just squinted at one cross-eyed through a slit in the fence, or got the idea from a coloured photograph. Perhaps you'll think that's rather stupid and exaggerated, but I can't describe it any better. That really is what happened to me.

'I think it started while I was in Kaustborg, or perhaps it was before. I can remember looking back, the first night I spent in Kaustborg, and realizing how vividly I could recall the time I spent with you on the *Oenexia*, and how precious that memory was. I didn't think about it much, I didn't try to analyse my feelings. I was only conscious that I had experienced a curious, a rather sad kind of happiness, sad because it was all over. I was rather worried at that time about the expedition I had planned and other things, and I thought that perhaps my head had gone a little funny. I wanted to see you again, but I was afraid to do so, I don't know quite why. Perhaps I was afraid that something I treasured would be broken, or perhaps it was just the caution I had developed acting almost without my consciousness. It was rather an unhappy time, those days at Kaustborg. And then I saw you at the station. I'm not sure quite what happened then—it was a hot day, you remember, and there was a crowd, and I was rather anxious and confused. But I realized then, just at that moment, that I didn't care about the work I had planned, that I was going to be miserable because the piece of life in which I had known you had come to an end. In a curious way I felt that I had betrayed you.

'There wasn't anything I could do. You see, the male has a kind of pride which rules him like a slave-driver, and that made it impossible, to use that word in a loose way, for me to turn back. I didn't send a

letter, because at that time there was nothing I could express in writing. I just made up my mind that in devoting all my thoughts and energy to the job I was starting I would get the curious sensations I had out of my head. I told myself that by writing I could do no good to you. It seemed to me then that Duty, which I spelt with the Victorian capital, demanded unequivocally that I should put the memory of our time together far away behind me. Yet even then I began to question whether Duty, as I had hitherto conceived it, was the final authority which must govern my thoughts and actions. And when I came back from the journey, and was suffering from my illness, I couldn't think of duty any more. I only wanted to find where you were and be with you again.

'I have told you all this to make you realize that the emotion which has grown in me is not a sudden or a foolish thing. It is not that my head was turned by the beauty of your body, because I had hardly realized then that you were beautiful and I had so forgotten your face that I couldn't make a picture of it in my mind. I thought of you as someone apart from your body, which I had all but forgotten, I saw you as spiritual beauty and tenderness and courage united in a single being that was human and yet too large to be enclosed in the frame of humanity, although humanity as I have known it can be wide and high and wonderfully near to godhood. Then at last I found you and I came face to face with all the wonder I had conceived in the actuality of flesh and blood, my vision became a reality more amazing than anything I had imagined, I heard your voice and I felt as if an angel had come to speak to me.

'Greta darling, I want you to forget all that I have

written in this letter, because I'm tired and stupid and I'm trying to explain something that I have never imagined before. And to remember one thing only, that in you I have found something more beautiful and more precious than anything which I have experienced in art or humanity or the richness of living. I want you to know that I love you, and that everything you have heard or imagined of love is something weak and commonplace compared with the strength of my love for you. Greta my darling, my love, my precious, there is nothing in all the age of man's loving like the fiery beauty you have lit in me, like the wonder you have shown me in your beauty.

'I have got to go away now, because I'm ill and I haven't got a long time left. I mustn't stay near you, because you are sacredly joined to somebody else, and it would be wrong for me to let my love come so near to you. And you see, my darling, my illness is affecting me so that I can't go on being ordinary, and I shan't have the strength any longer which I should have to have to be near you and to be your friend and not to let my love burst out and enfold you. I'm going to a place called Valstik which I know, where it's very quiet and where there are hills and trees. That will be a nice place for me to stay still and think about you until I can't do any more thinking. I won't go any farther away than there, because I want to feel that some of the wind that comes from the east has passed over you, I want to be near enough to feel your bodily presence while I am still able to feel the wind and sunshine. But I don't think I shall be there very long. You see Greta, Greta my darling, it's an illness that you don't get better from.

'Greta darling, I pray that if this letter gets to you it won't make you unhappy. It shouldn't do that, my darling, because although it has been a sadness for me to have loved you when it was too late, yet I would not have liked to live and die without knowing all the richness that there is in looking at perfect beauty and loving such beauty as I have done. I want you to feel like that, Greta, that you have given me far more in wonder than in sadness. And even if it is wrong of me to love—but how can it be wrong, when love is so strong and so beautiful?—even if it is wrong, then it is only I who have done the wrong, for it cannot be wrong to be loved as I love you. And I want you to be proud, because it is wonderful and godlike to inspire a great and powerful love, even in someone who is not great or noble. I do not want you to love me, Greta, I don't want you to remember my name or what I was like. But I want you to feel all your life that the splendour of your humanity was a light and flame of beauty to a man who had not lived until he knew you and who died with the loveliness of your presence held passionately close in the part of his spirit which is nearest to God's temple. Forgive me, Greta, if I have made you unhappy. Don't remember anything except the love that burst up to answer your tenderness and beauty.

'God bless you, Greta, my Greta, my precious, my darling.'

He signed the letter and put it in an envelope he found among his things, sealed it, and wrote her address. He was not sure how to get it delivered.

He had not re-read the letter, for he was afraid to realize its gaucherie. 'I might tear it up,' he thought,

'and fail in strength to write another. At least it was written as my heart dictated; I could write nothing that would come nearer to what I want to say.'

It was a deep relief to have the letter written. He had pricked a vein to release the pressure of his emotion, he felt as if she knew already the secret he had longed to make her share. It belonged to her, the secret of his passion, it was like an unpolished jewel which he had found and kept for her and now delivered for her keeping. He could go away now, he would trust to lose the memory of her and to carry with him only its sweetness. He had kept himself, he had forced the light of his reason to remain alive while the clouds, passing, grew monstrously to hide it. He had seen her now, and delivered up his jewel.

I shall not hear the nightingale. . . .

¶ The night had reached the hour of silence, there was no sound from the town. An hour ago the music had stopped finally, the shuttered voices become louder as the door was opened and the men in twos and threes came out into the street. For a long time the voices had still reached him, but one by one the groups had moved away, their footsteps clattering on the market cobbles, someone had slammed the door and swung the holding beam in place, the last of the human noises had shortly vanished beneath the tide of silence.

Yet he knew, with a sense quickened by custom to the smaller differences of night-time, that the house was not asleep. If there were voices in the rooms below he could not hear them, there was no sound of a newspaper turned over or of someone, sleepless like himself, who rose and shook his pillow or poured out water in a glass. It was, perhaps, rather the absence of certain noises—of

animals which moved in sleeping houses, a picture stirring slightly on its cord, the creak of a chair released from a man's weight—which, covered by a sound to him inaudible, sufficed to tell him he was not alone awake. He was not surprised, he was only apprehensive, when he heard the click of a latch far down and a footstep on the stairs.

For an instant he wildly thought it might be Greta. But the feet were heavy, and, from the sound, the toes at every step struck hard against the riser, showing boots too long for the measure of the stair. Seated on the edge of the bed, he kept himself quite still. It was frightening, at such an hour, to hear the steps advancing up the staircase.

The door was ajar, and through the five-inch gap he saw a pallid light appear which broadened like a sunrise on the stage. A giant shadow passed, and the door swung open. It was Brissaut, standing with a candle, in which his face showed haggard and unshaven like a sentry's face at dawn.

Brissaut stood still, blinking as if the candle dazzled him.

Andrew said: "Come in."

Brissaut blew out his candle and leant against the wall.

"So you've not gone to bed?"

"Not yet."

"You've not even got your clothes off?"

"No."

"Do y' never go to bed?"

"Sometimes. But I don't sleep very well. I've had a kind of illness, I can't sleep at nights."

"Or don't want to? Have you tried Ovaltine?"

He came nearer, edging his way along the wall.

"Did you like the party, or not much?"

Andrew had his eyes fixed on Brissaut's face. He wasn't sure if Brissaut . . .

"It was very kind of you," he said. "I'm afraid I'm not much good in company——"

"But it was nice to have you. You don't get many English in this goddam place, I was pleased to see you, I'll tell you that straight out. Here, will you smoke something?"

"No thanks."

"D'you mind if I do?"

"Of course not."

Brissaut lit a cigar and threw the match out of the window.

"It's funny," he said. "I was thinking only this afternoon—or yesterday, I should call it now—how I missed having a man of my own country to talk to. Oh yes, English or Irish, there's not that much difference when you're in a place like this. It's the language you want to hear, when you've been listening all day to the sort of English a squirt like that Kapa fellow is given to talking. He's clever, mind you, he talks it better than most. But it's not the same thing. And he's no gentleman, that Kapa chap, of any sort of nationality, or I'm a bastard. I'm no snob at all, but when you're used to the company of gentlefolk, well, you get to want it with a sort of homesickness. (D'you mind if I shut this window?) I said to Greta yesterday—or when was it, I don't know, I've no memory at all—I was saying to Greta I'd give all the wealth I possessed to have the company of gentlefolk again, someone who'd talk a bit of sense in a language I can understand. You don't know what it's like, Wild, not hearing good English talked for week after week, day in month out. (I'll open this window, if you don't mind, it's as stuffy as a

hencoop. Is there anything I can drink up here? Oh never mind, it's no matter at all.) But business is business, you've got to think of that. So you see, it was a hell of a good break for me, that was how I thought, your coming in like that. I'll tell you that straight out, I was all hell glad you came in like that."

He crossed the room to throw the cigar, of which he had barely smoked a quarter-inch, into the wash-jug; and returning stood before the candle, which, placed upon the oilcloth, made his shadow lean gigantically across the nearer wall and up on to the ceiling.

"But it's queer, I was thinking that at supper, the way you came like that. Just out of nowhere. I did a lot of thinking, the time that all that noise was going on. It was as queer, I thought, as anything I'd heard of. D'you know what I thought? I thought, 'It's damned queer, this professor fellow coming in like this, right out of nowhere.' No, see here, just listen to me! I'll tell you how I thought it out. Where was it I first saw you? Oh no, you don't remember, of course you don't remember, but I do. Pawlmawr. That's where it was, and you came on the boat just after I did. That was a queer thing, wasn't it? No, shut up, listen. You had a squad of fellows with you, didn't you now? There was one big fellow like a policeman, and a little French fellow, an odd bunch of boys you'd collected. Well, I thought nothing of that at the time. I'd got my own affairs to look after, and I'd got as good a passport as the rest of you, I had no cause to be worrying what you and your bunch were after. But it seemed queer to me, the way you came sneakin' round to my hotel that night—oh yes, I saw you out of the window. I was standing smokin' at the window and I saw you clear as anything in the light from the hall. Well, I just thought

it was queer, that was all. And I thought it was queerer still when the whole bunch of you went off one day on a butterflyin' trip, and they were saying in the Ship-masters' Club where I was having a drink that there wasn't one among the lot of you knew the difference between a butterfly an' a bed-bug—oh yes, it was all round the town, that story. An' then like a goddam fool I gave my next address at the Central, but I had the common gumption to leave the space blank at Warsaw. And yet you come walkin' in as if I was a sort of beacon you could see from one side Europe to the other. That was smart, I'll give you that, I don't know how you did it, but it was damned smart whichever way it was. And I thought as I was down there drinkin' that awful stuff o' Groensen's, 'Well, that's the queerest thing of all.'"

Andrew heard him sleepily. He wasn't sure what the man was saying, he only wanted to be alone.

"I'm tired," he said, "I'd be glad—another time—to talk about——"

Brissaut stepped forward and leant over, so that Andrew could hardly see his face, only the menacing bulk of him.

"You're tired, are you? Well, tell me this, and that'll do for to-night. You're all right for to-night, there's no telegraph, nothing's open, there's nothing you can do. I only want you to tell me this—only you'd better hurry—who is it that's paying you? Is it Dublin Castle, or the tradesmen in Shallytoun? Here, keep still, don't goggle at me that way, I'm not going to choke you, not before I know what you're up to. Is it the tradesmen are paying you to keep your fine philosophical eye on their dirty little bills?"

Andrew shifted. He had one arm free. If neces-

sary . . .

"I don't know what you're talking about," he said.

"Oh, you think I'm bottled, do you? Well, listen to me, then. I'm as sober as you are, I'm a dam sight more sober, I'm as sober as the Church of Ireland by law established. Come on, now, you needn't be frightened, I only want you to tell me. What've you come here for, that's what I want you to tell me."

He had his lie ready.

"I was on my way to Istanbul. I knew you were here, it wasn't so very far out of my way, I thought I'd just——"

"Yes, sure, you knew I was here. It took you the whole of a year, or dam near it, to find that out. But you couldn't go back to Dublin and tell them I'd just walked away from you while you were butterflyin'. You thought——"

"I can only repeat, I don't know what you mean. I've no connexion——"

"You're not telling me they sent you from San Frisco? That's a story that was dead ten years back. It's a mug's game, smugglin', I've never had a hand in that, there's not a black-faced liar in the whole continent who'd——"

Andrew got up. The suddenness of his movement threw Brissaut out of his stride.

"Look here, Brissaut, I'm tired and I'm sick, I'm not going to listen to you mumbling any longer. Stop that, listen to me. I've been polite to you because you were my host at dinner—I've got to pay for it, but you invited me. Shut up, that doesn't matter. But I want to be alone now, I'm sick to death of the sound of your voice, I've not the slightest interest in the infantile peccadilloes you want to talk about. No, I'm not questioning your sobriety, you may be as sober as

a judge. But you seem to have an idea that I'm spying on you—yes, that's what you're trying to make out, isn't it? You seriously suggest that I've made it my sole business in the last year to keep on your track in the ludicrous hope of getting evidence against you. What for, I don't know. I suppose you think I can get you in the local courts, have you extradited, conduct you back to Ireland, and then get hold of the four and sixpence you owe your milkman. Is that what you think? Well, look here, wait, I've got a cutting from a newspaper, it's from *The Times*, you'll believe what you see in *The Times*, it'll tell you what I have been doing since you saw me. Wait, it's in my suitcase. What do you say? No, you may as well see it, and then perhaps you'll leave me alone."

He had the suitcase open and was burrowing to find the cutting. He felt Brissaut's arm come round his waist.

"See here, Professor, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to upset you, that was only a joke of mine. I didn't mean that what I said, god's truth I didn't, and I never meant you should pay for that dinner. No, I don't want to see your paper. Listen to me now, we're friends, you and me, we've always been pals together. I was worried, that was what it was, it's the business I'm doing here is tricky, it's a worry when you have to deal with foreigners all the time, it makes you queer and nervy. And you see what it is, a fellow who's knocked about as much as I have, he can't be sure of always keeping on the right side of the legal arrangements. The law's an awkward thing, it differs from one country to another. And I'd no one but my own feet to stand on, I was pushed out into the world at the age when other lads are playing football. You've got to realize that, Professor, it's not so easy for all of us as it is for some. . . ."

Andrew crumpled the cutting and threw it away.

"Well, if you don't want to see it . . . yes, I understand all that, yes, I understand, yes, I understand perfectly. But I'm tired, I want to be alone, I'm tired of talking. Will you go away, please, I want to be alone now."

Brissaut moved towards the door, stopped, and turned round. He looked about him as if he had lost something, hesitant, perplexed.

"You're not sore with me?" he asked. "You don't think——"

"Of course not. I only want——"

"Would you like to come back with me, just as far as the house? I'd give you a drink, I've got something——"

"If you don't mind, I——"

"I'd like you to come back with me. It's lonely, walking all by yourself in the dark. I'd be——"

"But it's no distance——"

"But I'd like you to come. It's a bad town, this, to be alone in after dark. And I'm not too steady, I've been overworking a morsel, the sun plays the devil with you, I've been about in the sun all day. I'd be grateful if——"

"I'm sorry, but I'm rather tired. If you don't mind——"

"It's not much to ask a fellow. If you——"

"I'm sorry."

"All right."

Brissaut took up his candle and stooped to light it by the one on the floor. Andrew watched him from the bed, his eyes half closed; and saw, then, the letter he had written lying where it had fallen on the oilcloth.

"Is this yours or mine?" Brissaut asked. He picked up the letter and turned it over. "Oh, it's for Greta."

Andrew said nothing. In the effort to get rid of Brissaut, to match wilfulness with a show of reason, he had spent too much of his reserve. He sat as if held by paralysis, watching the play before him with fearful curiosity. The candles were close together, the one at Brissaut's feet, the other in his hand. It was as though Brissaut stood hard against the footlights, acting slowly a part he had carefully rehearsed: stooping, picking up the letter, turning it over. It was of vast importance what Brissaut should do next. But Andrew watched him from a distant gallery, a tired spectator.

"All right," Brissaut said, "I'll give it to her."

He put the letter in his outer pocket; and with a shrug as if to brace himself, began to go downstairs.

¶It seemed to Andrew that a long time passed while Brissaut, holding the handrail and placing his feet with caution on each stair, descended slowly to the first half-stage. He thought, in that interval of time, that his suspense was over. The man had gone, he could be alone again. But his mind was conscious of disturbance; as he listened to the heavy footsteps he came to know its source. Brissaut had got his letter, the testament where his dearest thought was uttered. That was a treasure which could not be replaced, he would have no strength to fashion it again. Between the banisters he caught a glimpse of Brissaut's face. It was pale, like plasticine, in the light of the dragging flame; the eyes wide as they peered across the candle towards the lower darkness, and stretched, the watcher thought, with the tension of a curious fear; but the mouth, he thought, was twisted by a tenuous sarcastic smile. In

a moment the face had gone, the shadow of Brissaut's splendid head and shoulders drew down across the slope of ceiling. He felt, as it disappeared and the light on the stairs grew fainter, as if a picture he had taken years to paint were dangled above a bonfire's leaping flames.

Before the light had altogether gone his stupor left him. He rose, put on his jacket, and crossed the room, he ran on to the tiny landing, he leant across the head-rail calling "Brissaut! Wait! I'm coming with you."

It seemed that Brissaut did not hear him. He saw beyond the lower turn the light of the waving flame, he heard the footsteps distantly. Reckless of safety, for the narrow stairs were easy to stumble on in semi-darkness, he ran down, shouting "Brissaut."

His thoughts as he ran moved quickly. Brissaut had faced him when he put the letter in his pocket, it was therefore on the right-hand side. He must be cautious, for the man's mood was uncertain, he might in tardy curiosity demand to read the letter or wilfully destroy it. If he walked on Brissaut's right he might, in the darkened street, succeed in taking it. If needful . . .

Brissaut was standing, when he caught him, at the door into the parlour, his hand upon the latch.

He called: "Brissaut! One minute, wait, I'm coming with you."

As if he heard him then for the first time, Brissaut turned sharply round.

"Will y' have the goodness to dismiss yourself. You've got a thunderin' nerve, followin' me down like an old she-goat. If you think I'm scared, I'll have you know your thoughts are lyin' to you. If you say that again I'll knock your block off. There's no man or

devil a Brissaut's been scared of since the day of creation. An' if I want a policeman, it's not a witherin' old professor I'll be askin' to look after me. Will y' get to hell away from here before I smash your face in."

From the other side the door was opened.

¶ The room looked smaller now that it was empty. The tables had been pushed against the walls, the benches overturned on top. The lamps were out, save one which hung above the counter, its rays too weak to light the farther wall across the fog of captured smoke. The flies were quiet, asleep upon the ceiling.

That was where she had sat, there, where Kapadoulos stood with hands on hips, his thumbs inside his trousers, a leg crossed over with the toe in pirouette. But he could not see her there, and the room was like a body with the soul migrated, like a ballet costume thrown across a chair. The crowd had gone, the murmur and the music, he was not sure if he had seen this room before.

Brissaut put down and snuffed his candle.

"Still here?" he said to Kapadoulos. "Here, Groensen, can y' find me something wet to drink?"

Groensen paid no attention. He was in his shirt-sleeves, the cigarette which hung from his lower lip was out. He was twisting his beard-point between thumb and finger, his eyes on Jdethis who was talking ceaselessly, his posture that of a drowsy chaplain at a Tyburn hanging. He had raised the holding beam, and his hand was on the latch of the outer door.

"You must go off home," he murmured, "I can't stay up all night."

Andrew stood near to Brissaut. The letter was within his reach, but Brissaut's hand was firmly in

the pocket, as if he knew the value of what he held. 'I must wait,' he thought, 'for the darkness in the street.'

It was an effort to control his patience. The men stood still, they watched each other quietly, Jdethis alone was speaking in the rapid monotone of a child who tries to claim attention from aloof adults. The heat in the room was stifling, the air was stale and putrid with the odour of spirits and cigars. He thought that daylight should have come long since, he longed to throw the street-door open and admit the cleansing air. His eyes, half closed, began to roam from one side to the other, along the counter where the débris of the meal was piled among the empty glasses, across the drowsy form of Groensen to Jdethis' angry face, back to the faintly smiling face of Kapadoulos. 'It is a dream,' he thought, but the button of his coat was hard between his fingers, he could see when his eyes turned left the texture of Brissaut's sleeve. He was fearful lest, in the fatigue of waiting, he should forget his purpose. The letter, it was only that which mattered, it was his gift to her, the only gift he had.

His gaze was on Groensen now, and as he looked the man grew larger. He thought that the face had swelled, but realized then it was coming slowly closer, the room had narrowed, the walls were creeping in. The objects he had dimly seen on the farther tables grew till their detail was distinct before his eyes, if he stretched an arm he could have touched the glasses. The ceiling had sunk lower, the floor was rising. It happened slowly, the movement of the walls could scarcely be perceived, only he felt as they crept closer that the air was caught and pressed between. He wanted to cry warning, but his tongue was held. The stupor he had

felt before was fastened on his mind again, he stood quite still and rigid like a soldier's statue which sees unmoved the bustle of the town.

His eyes came by degrees to normal focus, the objects of the room grew clear and hard, only the men were larger, close together, while he himself had shrunk beneath his size. He drew a little back and saw his body rigid, noted his head that reached but hardly to the top of Brissaut's ears. The head was hollow and he thought it looked unsteady, he saw it lolling over, and in alarm sprang forward to sustain it. He heard, in some surprise, his own voice saying quietly:

"Well, Brissaut, it's time we were getting on."

¶ His sentence touched the actors into motion.

"That's right," Brissaut said. "Well, boys, I must say good night."

Kapadoulos moved a pace towards the doorway. He was smiling still, and the gold crowns of his teeth gleamed in the scanty light. His eyes were fixed on Brissaut.

"Ein Augenblick! I'm sorry, it's too bad, Sandy, this Jdethis here is asking for some money. He keeps on to say——"

"In the morning," Brissaut answered shortly, but it was Groensen now who stopped him.

"And the dinner? Is it you who pay?"

"That's my affair," Andrew told him, "I said before I——"

"And perhaps," Kapadoulos said, "the English gentleman, the friend of Sandy, he might give forward a small bit of money. A small—how say?—advance-ment. A little money bit for old Jdethis, some for Kapa. You ask him, Sandy?"

Brissaut hesitated, glancing at Andrew.

"No," he said firmly. "I'm not the kind of chap that sponges on his friends."

"But not so long," Kapadoulos pleaded. "Until the money come from England, yes? A piece of advancement. Old Jdethis here, he gets the temper, he's got dam angry, sure. He thinks you liar, he says you're goddam thief, he thinks he gets no money at all sure. I tell him——"

"If it's any help——" Andrew began.

Brissaut swung round and moved a step towards Jdethis.

"What does he say? Did you say he said I'm a liar? You, here, did y' have th' infernal cheek to call me a liar. Did y'——"

Groensen had come between them.

"That's enough," he said in German. "I don't want trouble in here."

Sandy began to laugh.

"You don't want trouble. D' you hear that, Professor, did y' hear him say he didn't want trouble. If it's trouble he's avoidin'——"

Andrew asked:

"How much do you want?"

"From you?" Brissaut had turned right round and faced him squarely, "from you? Not a cent. When it comes to borrowin' money I take it from my friends. I'd like to know——"

"But I'm only——"

"I'd like to know the reason you're writin' letters to my girl. What? You're not denyin' you're writing her love letters, been writin' her ever since I took her away? You were flirtin' with her on shipboard, only I was too blind to see it, you——"

"That," said Groensen, "is a different matter. What has to be settled——"

"Will y' be quiet. This is between me and this fellow. I don't want any kind of interruption from you, nor any other lousy dago that——"

"Now listen, Brissaut, I'm going to be perfectly plain——"

"Then you'll tell me, please, if this is a love letter, or if——"

"Before I tell you that——"

"Five hundred oltsen!" Jdethis repeated, shivering with fear and rage. "He said he would——"

"It's all right," Kapadoulos reassured him, "he won't leave this place till——"

"Will y' tell me yes or no," Brissaut stormed, "I want an answer from you, Wild, and I want it quick. Will y' tell me——"

"I want you to tell me something first. Do you love your wife? You made a vow to——"

"Will y' have the goodness to mind your own affairs! I'm not saying I'm a good husband, there aren't many men of my category can call themselves that. But I'll tell you this, Mr. Nosey Professor Parker, and I'll tell it you sober, if any man was to say a word against that girl, I'd have his bleedin' throat cut before he'd got the words finished. An' if anyone was to do a thing she didn't like——"

Kapadoulos' smile was gone.

"That's 'nough of all that talk. Will you pay up, Sandy or——"

"Now wait," Groensen said. "If you——"

"Hold your tongue. Will y' shut up, y' bastards, the whole lot of you. Now see here, Wild, will you answer yes or no. Have you been makin' love to my wife?"

"No."

"Then there'll be no harm in my readin' this letter you've written. Perhaps the other gentlemen here would like to hear it, seeing it's a nice continental kind o' custom writin' letters to another fellow's wife. It'll be interestin'——"

He had taken the envelope from his pocket and was handling it with some deliberation. Andrew watched him. He was aware that the other men had come up close, that Jdethis stood on tiptoe trying vainly to see over Brissaut's shoulder. He whispered:

"Will you give me that letter please, Brissaut, will you give me that letter. . . . Will you, or I'll——"

Brissaut had his finger in the crease. His head was bent, he smiled.

"Will you, or I'll——"

He saw it was Groensen who, with a lightning movement, reached up and crashed the lamp to darkness. He knew that as he lunged the letter fell. His fist struck Brissaut's head but only lightly. He heard: "You bast— . . . *Christ!* Put up that light! Put up——"

He still knew roughly where the outer door was. He stumbled forward, tripped on a man who lay full length upon the floor, got up and thrust aside another who blocked his passage. He heard the voice of Kapadoulos, "Put the light up, give us a light you, Groensen!" and Brissaut's voice, faint and a long way distant, "Will y' help me, Wild, they've . . ." But before a lamp was lit he had found the doorway, and once outside the door, he ran.

¶ In sleep she stood at the head of a flight of stairs, which stretched away to darkness. Someone was mounting from the bottom, slowly, very slowly, she could not see

him but she heard the footsteps, he was stumbling and she stretched her hand to help.

Her hand had touched his shoulder, he was on the bed beside her, she could smell his breath. She turned right over, and would have fallen into sleep again, but she heard him whisper: "Water. Drink o' water." She said: "I'll get you some."

She stumbled from the bed and felt for the candle, but her hand refused to find it. She could do without. She heard him murmur: "Greta, darlin' . . ." and repeated: "It's all right, Sandy, I'll get it straight away."

She felt her way down the narrow stairs, and through into the kitchen. There were matches by the stove, the one she struck showed only a broken jam-pot, but that would do, Sandy would never mind. She filled the pot at the pump in the courtyard, bolted the outer door again, and started to go back.

Outside the air had chilled her, reaching her skin through the cotton nightgown; but she was yet only half awake. She felt her way with caution, slopping the water from the jar despite her care, wetting the stairs she trod on. And near the top her bare feet felt another kind of wetness, warm and glutinous.

The matches were still in her hand. She put the jar down, struck another, and saw what the dampness was.

"You must regard yourself as under informal arrest," the Charterman repeated. "It will not be for long, you must not regard it as an indignity, it is not in any way intended to impugn your innocence. But for the time being everybody connected with the affair is under arrest."

With a little bow the Charterman turned and tripped down the steps from Groensen's private room into the dining-parlour. At this hour he was normally in his bakehouse, where with one assistant and a transient apprentice he baked in person for the richer citizens of half the town. To-day he was in his morning dress, as if for Mass, his chain of office hung about his neck, his pince-nez fastened on his nose, a brief-bag clasped beneath his arm. At frequent intervals he made his way from the Charter Chamber to the inn where, for convenience, the widow had been placed. When townsmen called him in the street, 'Hi! Petroff! Why the Mass-kit?' he affected total deafness. His face, from which all traces of flour had been removed, was pale and lined with care.

The entrance to Groensen's room, having lost its door a dozen years before, was shielded by a strip of yellow calico which hardly met the sides; and the idle folk who by twos and threes had crowded in the parlour ostensibly for a glass of barley beer or vodqua could sometimes catch a glimpse, by agile head-work, of the woman closeted within. Some of the boldest mounted

to the second step to obtain a better view. But at intervals the face of Olga Groensen, appearing furiously beside the curtain, would frighten them away.

Job Zeschin was admitted. Enjoying trade relationship with Groensen, his position was unique. He waited till the Charterman had gone and shuffled up the stairs, whispered 'Zeschin!' and slipped inside the curtain. He held before him a card which bore his name in flamboyant script surrounded by a border, a half-inch breadth of black. He repeated 'Zeschin,' thrust the card into the woman's lap, bowed very low, and murmured 'Ples' inst echostzein, m'ans, ples'inst.'

"I should be happy," he continued, "to take from your shoulders all anxiety. You shall lean on me, you shall suffer no more care. Zeschin. Job Zeschin. Or if you do not know a name so humble, Olga Groensen here will swear that I am pious, a master in my profession. I will furnish a list, if you wish, of the distinguished persons for whom I have had the honour of making all arrangements. Three Chartermen, no less, and two heads of the brewery, I arranged the pomps myself, down to the final detail."

"I'm sorry, but——"

"Ah, but I understand. And that is where you will find me fully capable. I have buried all nationalities, I know as well as you do how the English like. The legs crossed over, the hands behind the back, the hair well oiled and parted in the middle. I allow a discount of fifteen per cent for the inclusive order, and everything is effected with the utmost reverence, in very classy style. Your worries will all be over. . . ."

"That's enough, Job Zeschin," a harsh voice said behind him. "You can go now, yes, you can go and drown yourself in the lake. You can go and play with

the tame worms you arrange for to masticate the corpses. You can try and get the money Gosow owes you from the time you tried to cheat him with that wardrobe. You can——"

She was stopped by Olga Groensen.

"And by whose permission, Lsesta Ogrosyts, are you paying me the honour of a call? I am not accustomed to have the lower houses of the Mshana Gast on this side of the curtain. If you require a Zinza——"

"I have come," Lsesta replied with dignity, "to protect my unhappy friend against the plots of dishonest baking-men and tavern keepers. They tell me——"

"If you have no objection to returning to the parlour——"

"And as to the Mshana Gast, Olga Polhita, I was wondering only yesterday which of the two houses below my own is the one that you were born in. I was saying to Gosow, 'You remember that Olga Polhita you used to lie with before you came to me, the one that had to console herself with the innkeeper——'"

"If you will allow me, little sisters," Zeschin interrupted, "I have an affair of business——"

"Wait, Job Zeschin, here's the baker coming. There's an order for you, all you want is the signature. The box won't be a big one, a metre and a half would hold him, but you can charge for a metre and three-quarters, all his relations are blind in both their eyes."

"I have been," said the Charterman, arriving once again upon the threshold, "in contact with the Seneschal at Henizv. He warmly approves of all the steps I have taken, and he requests me to keep you under honourable arrest, Greta Bressitz, until he has arrived to make his personal investigation. He is coming by a special petrol-boat. He says the case is of the utmost

importance, he has arranged already for the arrest of a man who was associated with the body. He will be here quite shortly. I have had a conversation with him on the telephone. The municipality," he added, "will pay the cost of the connexion."

"You will be glad to learn, Charterman Petroff, that I have undertaken all the arrangements for this lady here. I have agreed——"

"And I should like to know, Petroff, why you are keeping my friend shut up here. It's no place for a young girl, a tavern like this, with all the riff-raff drinking down there and no one but their overbreasted pander to look after her. You don't imagine——"

"I shall be infinitely obliged, Charterman Petroff, if you will use your authority to have this female removed from my sitting-room. She has not been——"

"If our little brother tried to use his authority with me, Olga Polhita, I should have some interesting information to pass to the municipality——"

A man who had just entered said:

"Excuse me, I understand that the widow is here. If you will pardon me, Charterman Petroff—no doubt I have your permission to ask the widow a few questions. The newspaper with which I correspond, a journal of the very highest reputation——"

"No one will ask the widow questions," Lsesta snapped, "so long as I am here to protect her——"

Olga Groensen pushed in front of him.

"I appeal to you, Charterman Petroff. My private room is becoming like an auction-chamber——"

"There would be few buyers at an auction, Olga Polhita, if it was held in a room which stank like this one. I myself would rather——"

"You must excuse me," the Charterman said, "I

have arrangements to make, I must prepare to receive the Constable from Henizv. I will return presently. The widow is to remain here—in honourable arrest, you understand—until I come again. I hold you responsible, Olga Groensen."

"And now," said the correspondent, "if the widow will be so kind as to give me her attention for a few moments——"

"But first," said Zeschin, "the gracious widow and I have a little business to transact together. . . ."

The crowd in the dining-parlour had swollen, the waiters ran and dodged like acrobats to serve the customers, Groensen sweating in his shirt sleeves could scarcely cope with the thirst for wine and information.

"You must ask the Charterman," he said, "he has the affair in charge, there's nothing I can tell you. Oh yes, he was dining here last night, he often dined here, he was more a friend than a customer. It seems hardly possible—only a few hours gone. And he said to me as he was leaving 'That's the finest dinner, Ansol Groensen, you have ever served me. I won't forget your kindness, Ansol Groensen'—that's what he told me, those were his very words. No, he was gone soon after midnight, his friends stayed longer. (No, two and seventy, that's the price to-day.) I can tell you, brothers and gentlemen, it was the greatest shock I ever had when I heard the news this morning."

"But Beneschon the Watch said——"

"The Watch! I've not a word to say against him, he's a faithful customer, a worthy friend. But if I'm a judge of how much wine a man can take before he goes on duty——"

"Is it true, Ansol Groensen, there was blood all across the market? Beneschon told me——"

"If there was no blood in the market, Pyotr Debavninz, then there was not a calf slaughtered all yesterday. And judging by the noise the beasts were making. . . ."

Someone cried: "The Seneschal! The Seneschal's here now," and the audience centred on the counter with one accord turned round. But the alarm was false. The car was a huge Mercedes tourer, dusty and hot with travel, the driver a sunburnt foreigner, bareheaded, in an open shirt. The crowd, which had moved towards the doorway, shuffled back inside the room.

". . . you suppose, Ansol Groensen, that the woman had a lover? . . ."

¶'If I had loved him more,' she thought, 'it would not have happened.'

Her chair faced the window, she could see the coloured awnings of the market stalls, the tower of St. Estenia, the gabled houses squeezed together on the Tsistavedrikost. The sun, which had risen so many hours ago, played now upon her hands. It barely warmed her, for the chill inside her body resisted outside warmth. But it gave to the market-place the colour of serenity, the smell of cow and goat dung rose with the hucksters' voices in the dusty air, to-day was as yesterday had been, as if the curtain had been lowered and the house-lights turned up in a theatre. She sat quite still, for her limbs were weak and apathetic; but she longed to stand against the window, where the noises of the market would drown the prurient hubbub rising from below, where, quietly watching, she could try to rediscover her place in that familiar world. Her mind was calm, she had read with her eyes from a tattered magazine while she sat alone in the kitchen, she had calmly watched when they carried him away. If she

had screamed or wept the clot of pain in her breast might have been released. But she had not cried, the love she had for her partner in experience had been too quiet to issue from her mouth. 'He lived with me,' she thought, 'and now I am left alone.' If they would let her go, to clean the house, to tidy, to buy the things she wanted in the market, to read again in solitude the letter Groensen's wife had given her, then the pain might dwindle, she might find herself. But they would not leave her alone, they would give her neither solitude nor silence. 'In the market-place,' she thought, 'I should be lost among the crowd, the country people would not know me.' With an effort she rose and moved over to the window; she stared down at the crowd below, saw a motor pushing its lengthy bonnet towards the door of the hotel. Then someone pointed upwards and she heard a man shout 'Look! Up there!' She turned, and another face was added to the group which pressed around her.

"The gracious widow will require to be legally advised. As an honourable attorney . . ."

"". . . Polski?" the foreigner asked, "oder Deutsch? German, all right then. A man called Wild—Vildt—W-I-L-D—is he staying here? No, W-I-L-D, yes, an Englishman, is he or is he not? Are you deaf or just thick in the head? What? Speak up, I can't hear you in all this din. He's been here? Then where is he now, when did he go? Nonsense, of course he left an address. Where's your register? Don't you keep a register? D'you realize you're liable to a fine of two thousand oltsen or two years' imprisonment for not keeping a register? Did he leave any letters, any luggage? I want to see anything he left. Where was his room?

Don't look at me in that moon-faced way. Get me a drink. Beer of some sort, Pilsner, what sort do you keep? All right, only it's got to be cold, I won't pay for it if it's lukewarm. And then I want to see his luggage. Get out of my way you, blast you; here, you, get me a chair."

The presence of so large and powerful a motor had given new impulse to the excitement radiating from the inn. The word had spread, despite the German markings, that the car was the Seneschal's from Henizv, that a formal arrest was likely, that pistols might be fired before the affair was over. The crowd on the tavern side grew thicker, the urchinry of neighbouring streets was already crawling on the luggage-grid and footboards, a pock-marked infant touched the electric horn.

"Send someone," the foreigner ordered, "to thrash that child. Here, I can't drink this, it's tepid, take it away. Where's his room, I want to see it myself. What's all this fuss? A murder? In civilized towns they have murders every day. Yes, hurry, I want to see his room."

The Seneschal, despite his corpulence, was hardly noticed as he pushed his way through the crowd. "This way!" the Charterman said, "this way, up these stairs." "Wait," said the Seneschal, "where is the owner of this inn?"

"I can tell you nothing," Groensen said, "only that he did not pay me. The servant here will witness that he had three dishes—there were five at table—ten Zinzas altogether, three large bottles of Votsasurq——"

"What time did he leave?"

"It was twelve o'clock, your honour, twelve by that clock, I saw it as he left. Or at least, it was no later than half-past."

"And he was the last to leave?"

"No, his friends left afterwards."

"And before he left you had an argument about the bill?"

"No, no, I trust my customers, we parted in a most friendly way."

"Where is the widow, Mr. Charterman?"

"A moment! I will fetch her down."

It was the lawyer who answered first the Charterman's summons.

"I have undertaken," he said, "to represent this lady. She instructs me to say her defence is unprepared. At present——"

"That is nonsense, Mr. Attorney, she can answer simple questions. You are the widow of the man deceased?"

"I am his widow."

"What time did he arrive home last night?"

"I cannot say."

"Will you please answer the Seneschal properly."

"I cannot say."

A street-runner had broken through the crowd.

"Excuse!" he said. "I have a message for your Honour. It was sent by telephone from Henizv."

"Give it, please, to the officer here. Wait, he will give you a reply. Now, Widow Bressitz."

"Perhaps your honour, if I were to question her in German—she understands that language better."

"Proceed, Mr. Attorney. And translate her answers. Ask her first what time the deceased arrived last night."

"Now, Widow Bressitz, I will undertake to give the right answers for you. But it's understood that I am charged with your defence?"

"All right."

"At ten to twelve, she says."

"That is a lie," said Groensen, "I was here when he left, I had my eyes on the clock——"

"Your Honour," said Lsesta, "you have the privilege of listening to the biggest liar in the fourteen baronies. He and the Charterman baker here have joined together——"

"May I call your Honour's attention to the fact that this woman is the most notorious slut in Anjlotny——"

"Silence, little sisters."

"And his wife, this woman in the violet night-gown——"

"Silence! Your honour, I have read the message. It states that two men have been arrested, that——"

"All right, all right! We can deal with that later on. I must have this building cleared. Clear everybody out. You, Mr. Charterman, will you please give instructions."

"Will you ask the men to go, please, Ansol Groensen."

The crowd edged back a yard or two. From the stairway door the foreigner had reappeared. His voice demanded:

"Where's that man Groensen?"

"Another time!" Groensen answered. "We have an inquiry in progress. As you see, the Seneschal from Henizv is here."

"I can't help the Seneschal. I want to know if you've taken anything out of Mr. Wild's room. Here, where's that man? You, go and get my car filled up with petrol. I don't care, you must find some somewhere. It wants oil, too, and some water in the radiator."

"Have you," the Seneschal demanded, "some connexion with this inquiry?"

"What's the old fool saying? Inquiry? Yes, a

friend of mine was staying here, his name is Wild. I want to know where he's gone. Do you know anything?"

He was answered in English by a woman.

"I think I know. At least, he may have gone to Valstik."

"Valstik? Where's that? Here, I've got a map. Hold that end, will you. Here, who are you? I've seen you before, or haven't I? Yes, on the *Ascanius*."

"No, the *Oenexia*. I remember you, you're Matt."

"Are you interested in this lady?" the lawyer asked.

"Extremely. Hold your tongue, you."

"I cannot countenance these interruptions," the Seneschal thundered. "Mr. Charterman, will you order this man to leave the hotel."

"Will you be good enough, Mr. Englishman, to leave this hotel."

"Certainly. Come on—what's your name, I can't remember—of course yes, Mrs. Brissaut. How did you know——?"

"The widow is to stop here."

"What widow? Oh, is he?—I'm frightfully sorry. Get out of my way, will you. What d'you say?"

"What language," the Seneschal asked, "does this man understand? Will you tell him, please, that the widow is not to leave the hotel."

"The Seneschal says the widow is not to leave the hotel."

"But I——"

"The Englishwoman says," Lsesta interposed, "that she requires an interval for natural purposes."

"Very well then, five minutes, five minutes only. And now, Mr. Innkeeper, I want to see where it was that the body was sitting at dinner last night. . . ."

Leaning against the car, while an excited boy poured water from a bucket into the radiator, Matt asked:

"You're certain about this place Valstik? Yes, I've found it, here it is, look, where my finger is. How do you know? Oh, he wrote to you. How odd. *You, if you don't get off that wing I'll cut out your entrails.* Well, I can try Valstik, anyway. I've got a bit of news for Wild that's going to make him jump. What are you tittering about? Are you laughing or crying?"

She said, between her schoolgirl giggles: "I was only thinking—how Sandy—how Sandy would have enjoyed all this. All this row."

"Oh my God!—for God's sake pull yourself together."

"I'm sorry, I——"

"Well, I must get on. Here, you, catch hold of this, this'll pay for the petrol. You, you there in the Zouave uniform, tell those people to get out of the way. Oh my God! Can you make 'em understand? Tell that fellow with the dirk to clear the fairway, will you. What? I can't hear in all this row. What? Of course, come by all means. Under arrest? What for? Have they got a warrant? They can't arrest you without a warrant."

The man in uniform saluted.

"Excuse! The Seneschal says that he wants to speak to you. You are to wait a few moments."

"What's he talking about? What Seneschal? D'you mind seeing if that radiator cap's tight, it leaks like sin if it isn't. Well, are you coming or aren't you? All right, get in then."

The crowd, awake at last to the driver's intentions, reluctantly fell back. A face appeared at a lower window, that of the Charterman, in a sweat of agitation.

His lips were trembling, he had taken a musket from the nearest officer and had it pointing at the car.

"Stop!" he bellowed.

"I'm afraid," Matt said as he started the engine, "you'll find this car not too comfortable. She's past her day, she gets infernally hot in front. You'll have to slam that door—here, let me! What's that old goat saying now?"

"He says that if you don't stop he'll shoot you through the pneumatics."

"My God, does he think he's acting in a film or something?"

The soldier standing in front of the bonnet leapt aside as the car moved forward. On the crowd in the market a silence fell, born of astonishment. Inside the Seneschal and his attendants shouted: "Hold that woman! Stop that car!" but the door was choked with men and women fighting to get a view.

"I've got a rug in the back somewhere, if you do feel cold." A gun went off, from behind they heard a click as if a pebble had been flung against the mudguard. "Blottsostaffe! I never thought that thing would go off." He changed into third. "Look here, I've got nothing edible with me, we shall have to find somewhere where we can feed. . . ."

"At five o'clock," the fisherman told him, "the first steamer. You can hear her now."

The village had only one street, at which the cart-tracks from the hillside farms arrived through gaps in the row of hunchback cottages. Where the torrent bent left to sweep into the lake the road turned right and ended unconcernedly in a slope of shingle, where poultry scrabbled for chaff at the very water's edge. From the gravelled terrace above the roadway, where the owner of the hens sold motor-spirit and Zinza, a flimsy pier stretched far enough to reach the steamer's draught. The fishing-boats lay shorewards of the pier-head, on a line that ran to the cheskin post some sixty metres off. This was Chmesiez.

His fellow-passengers were on the pier already, a shepherd from the village, a Franciscan who had walked overnight from Zenischiel. It was cold, standing there, even the friar shivered. Inland the light was clear and pleasant, the pasture slopes above the tramway cutting were already yellow in the morning sun. But the surface of the lake was misted, they saw the funnel before the steamer's hull.

The fisherman said: "There, you can see her now."

¶ The course the steamer followed was half a kilo-metre from the shore. Through the patchy mist he could see indistinctly the light and shadow of the granite cliffs, which rose to grey importance and fell away by stages till the rock-strewn meadows swept clear to the

line of shingle. And here the rock was broken into fissure, and here it rose close against the steamer from the lake itself, and here, wedged tight between the leaning cliffs, a fishing cottage sent its smoke towards the fields above. 'Perhaps' he thought, 'I am released already. Perhaps it will come no closer, perhaps the journey is already started and this is how men see their country as they begin to draw away.'

The pilot left the wheel in the hands of a ragged boy and came to collect the fares.

"And you?" he asked.

"For Valstik."

He showed the paper on which the name was written; he kept the paper in his pocket in case he should forget his destination. "Valstik," he repeated. But the man did not understand.

"The steamer goes to Opev," the friar told him, "that is the farthest point."

"To Valstik. A ticket for Valstik, please."

"For Valstik you must take the train . . . Here, give him please a ticket for Opev . . . I'm going that way myself, I'll put you on the train."

"This ticket is for Valstik?"

"No, for Opev. But I'll look after you, I'll take you to the train."

"I thank you."

The passengers sat all together on the after-deck, there was a supplement to travel forward. And the women who had come aboard at Anjlotny, huddled beneath a common shawl, talked continuously in twittering Psetisny about the murder. 'There was blood all down the Mshana Gast, I saw it myself as I came down this morning . . . Yes, Beneschon told me all about it.' 'A foreigner, you say?' 'Why, you

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know the man as well as I do, the big man who lived in the Mshana Gast, you must have seen him sometimes on the steamer. His woman was a friend of Razel Estochin . . . They murdered him in the market-place, that's what Beneschon told me. Beneschon fired off his musket, but the men ran away.' 'Who was it murdered him?' 'Another foreigner, Beneschon thinks it was . . . I saw the blood myself, as I was coming down the Mshana Gast this morning. "You can see the blood yourself," Beneschon told me.' The friar crouched over a grubby *De Imitatione,* his lips moved all the time, he seemed to be unconscious of everything around him.

"You are going to Opev?" the shepherd asked. "It is a big place, that, bigger than Anjlotny."

"I beg your pardon—if you will speak slower, please, I don't understand your language easily."

"You are going, I said, to Opev?"

"No, to Valstik."

"I've never heard of that place."

At Zistchen a sleepy officer, in the green and yellow uniform of the Stepsatrentsi, came on to examine the personal certificates. He nodded to the peasants who carelessly revealed their cards, stamped the friar's passport after officious scrutiny.

"And you?"

"You want me to make a statement?"

"I want to see your card."

"I'll tell you what happened, you can write it down. He had a letter I wanted, a letter I had written, it was very important, it didn't belong to him. I didn't mean to hurt him, the light went out. . . ."

"Your ticket please—your passport. Come, I haven't all day to waste."

"My passport?"

"Hurry, please."

It was in his inside pocket, where he always kept it with his notecase.

"There, there it is."

"The photo isn't like you. It's a clean-shaven man, much younger."

"I am ready to make a statement. I have told you already——"

"How long ago was the photo taken?"

"I can't remember. A long time ago. I can't remember things like that, my brain is tired, I don't sleep very well. I'll come ashore if you like and make a statement, I didn't mean to do him any harm."

A voice from the pier-head called, "Aleschsin, hurry, your coffee's getting cold!"

"All right, all right!" the officer said, stamping the passport. The starboard paddle thrashed the water, the bows swung out, the steamer moved away.

The steamer rounded Gadahov's fortress, which stood on a high bluff at the elbow of the lake, and steered north-west towards P'sinstos harbour. The mist had risen like the eyelids of a sleeper, to show the southern shore hardmarked and close, the water shimmering. The fore-arm of the lake was narrowing, and on the starboard side the foothills of the Estascriel rose steeply in a cassock of spruce and pine. On the nearer shore the green was scanty, the rocky beach rose lazily to tufted dunes, the shallow cliffs, round-headed, stood back a quarter-mile inland. The beach grew wider still, and where the cliffs were bitten out with quarries the strand was lined with metre track, on which the loaded trolleys ran down towards the floating cranes. Then, as the clutter against the shore increased, of tanks and pumping houses, of

wretched dwellings, of tugs and lighter-trains and toppling dredgers, the hinder desolation stretched to a mile or more; where, on the trivial bank to which the cliff had fallen, a row of concrete houses meanly spaced showed white against the sallow fields behind. Ahead, the jumble thickened, wreathed in smoke; behind the fence of yard and mast the sepia houses clotted to the substance of a town. He sat with his arm across the railing, his chin against his knuckles, his head a little turned towards the nearer shore. His head was motionless, only his eyes moved gently when an object on the shore caught his attention, a naked workman didling, a house where the lower floor had slipped away and the bedroom sprawled aslant upon the mud. Sometimes his eyes were closed, but only for a moment. He stared like a child with its nose on the carriage window, as if he had never travelled thus before. The sun, already faintly warm, was on his neck. The wind that blew, a quiet breeze only, came off the farther shore; it carried sparsely the odour of the forest, a memory of Kaustborg, a flavour half-forgotten of the gentle loneliness in which his spirit wrapped itself before he found her. But his tactual sense was quiet and sleepy, he did not feel the rail or the dried-up sweat where his clothes were tight on him, he did not feel that he was dirty. The rising of the mist had come as a surprise, he had thought it would grow darker. He had seen so many days come in, the far sky lighting, the colour quickening on a row of trees, the distant houses taking shape as he watched them from a prison window: but this he had not expected, its suddenness had awed him, he felt as if abruptly called from the darkening avenue of sleep. He had not slumbered. He could remember coming on board the steamer, and back to the wood he had sat in resting above

Chmesiez, back to his breathless flight along the tram-track, and farther still to the horrid dream he had experienced while full awake, of his fist struck out at the patch of flesh before him, of the darkness abruptly closing, of a man's body lying before his feet. And yet he had woken, if not from sleep, from a state akin to sleeping. For a little while the mist had held him bound, the shapes he saw had been the shapes of easy dreaming. He had seen her now, he was ready to surrender, and in that misty passage he had felt his spirit drawing free. He had fretted after sleep and yet kept hold of clearness, he had asked sufficient suppleness of mind to recognize, to speak to her, to understand her speaking. Now that duplicity had ended. He had awoken from a slumberous passage, but tranquillity had lasted. *Be silent and submissive, yield, sink thyself.* At last he had submitted, and, now with altered vision he saw the objects he had thought reality as from a larger distance, he could divorce himself from the heaviness of time that he remembered. The steamer nosed into the harbour, halted. A group of soldiers came on board, the steamer turned, ploughed forward, cleared the harbour entrance and headed for the landing-stage at Opev. The streets of the circling town came sheer on to the shingle, where ragged children gathered mud and stones in little trolleys. There was a woman waving from her window, a soldier from the steamer answered her. Now, as the coast turned round, the streets were full in sunlight, and up the steepest a man in overalls was pushing his heavy barrow. As if the autumn had already come the houses had their chimneys smoking, and yet the streets were dusty with the summer, the cobbles white with the wind-blown foreshore sand. He could smell the urban odour, the dusty brittle smell of the towns of Eastern Russia, he

could sense a poverty like Russia's in the bare untidy streets. And yet, as the town grew closer, he felt no pity for its poorness, the distance in between was fixed so wide that his pity would not cross it. His spirit rested quiet, it would not pay attention to the things which moved across the strip of water. The time for restlessness had gone, he was content to watch the play of shadow, to drink the sights and odours which his senses brought him, to feel the quietness of his spirit slumbering. This day, he thought, was not to be granted me. I am here to watch it pass, God lets me see it, God has not taken all I have surrendered. He closed his eyes again.

'It was another Englishman, they say, that murdered him. That's what Beneschon told me. And I saw the blood myself, all the way down the Novy Mshana Gast.'

He felt in the warm darkness that the breeze had stopped, the air become close and hot; and the smaller sounds to which he had listened were drowned in the sudden uproar of men's voices, of wheels on a cobbled street, the sputter of an engine, a squeaking winch. The friar touched his arm, and he opened his eyes to see the street quite close above him, the buildings raised like cliffs above the deck-rail. His sight had grown uncertain, the colours of the things he saw were overlaid with a shade of yellow, the movement of the traffic was shivering and blurred. "We go ashore now," the friar said in Polish, "and get the train for Eshpen. From there to Valstik isn't very far." The friar held his arm, and they made their way together up the steeply tilted gangway. They crossed the street in safety.

His legs were very stiff, his feet were blistered. He limped a little, leaning on the friar's arm. A group of students, arguing as they drank their Zinzas on the

pavement, followed him with their eyes. The shops were opening, the streets were already laden with the market traffic, the pavements thronged. "Where are you taking me?" he asked, and the friar said: "To the train, the train for Eshpen." They turned from the Lhosta Gast into an alley which twisted as it climbed, so narrow that a loaded donkey must be taken back if it met another between the turnings; dark and odorous. Here, where the sunlight came for but an hour each day, the walls were dank and mossy, the footway soft with the excrement of donkeys, the cottage rooms which they saw through open doorways so dark that at noon a woman must light a candle to do her sewing. The crumbling wall of a church leant over till it all but touched the upper windows of the beadle's house which faced it, a sewage stream appearing from beneath the doorstone of a wine-shop crossed the path unbridged to vanish through a crack between the walls. It was quiet. The children in the doorways gazed with their feeble eyes upon the wall which faced them or fiddled listlessly with the mud in which they sat, the sprawling dogs were asleep or scratching, the noise of the Lhosta traffic came only as a whisper through the tanglement of building. "Where are you taking me?" he asked again. They passed through a tunnel to the level roadway, where the coupled trams ran fast along the barrack wall, where the light, regained, was blinding. "I should like to rest," he said, but the friar hurried him: "The train will be going soon, we've got no time to lose." He was aware, but only distantly, of the pain in his legs and feet, as the students and the soldiers, the women with their baskets, the stalls the kosher shops the shabby trees the dingy office-houses moved slowly past his eyes.

The express for Chevrokop was already waiting when they reached the Oesta Veelsplac; against the cattle pens which spread the breadth of the avenue it had an air of giant sophistication. In the counting-shed the friar bought two tickets, single to Eshpen. "You must hurry," the fare-clerk told him, "the train is about to go." The only fourth-class coach was forward, coupled with the tender. Side by side along the gravel path they ran.

The carriage into which they climbed was empty. They sank exhausted on the narrow-seated settle, the friar unwrapped his breakfast: a sausage rolled in pastry, a lettuce and a piece of oscher-scone. "It is yours," he said, as he placed it on the seat between them. "The blessing of St. Francis will make it tasty. God grant the poor be satisfied while we do bless His name in eating." From another fold he took a jar of Senf Tüberndorf and a half-size bottle of Zieger wine. He drew the sausage from its lair, broke it in half and dipped it in the mustard. He swallowed it and amiably hiccoughed. "God grant," he said, "the journey be without mishap, that the wheels do not come off, the carriage fire, or the train meet another on the self-same line."

The coach had lain all night in a distant siding, but it held the fragrance still of yesterday's cigars, of vegetables and fruit. The sun was hot on the stained and dusty windows, which neither of the men had thought to open; already, though the train had made no sign of moving, they had passed into a different country, narrowly defined.

"Where are we going?" Andrew asked again. "Where are you taking me?"

Once more the friar made his patient explanation. They were going together to Eshpen, from there to

Valstik was but twenty miles, an easy walk to do in the cool of evening. To Valstik, that was where his brother meant to go?

"To Valstik, yes. It is kind of you to take me. But I do not think that I shall get so far."

"You are lame?" the friar asked. "You are not so used to walking?"

"I can walk," he said, "but I have not much time. I have an illness, my time has nearly gone."

"I think you are wrong," the friar said gently. "It is God who governs us, who measures out our days. No man can tell the time allotted him." He paused. "And you do not want to die?"

"I'm tired," he answered. "No, I am content to live so long as God is willing. If I can be quiet and warm—but not too hot. It's hot in this carriage here, the sun's too strong, it hurts my eyes. But rather that than cold. I don't want to be cold again."

"You say you are ill?"

"It is a kind of illness. It isn't much, I've had it for a long time. I get a kind of headache in the afternoon, it's very painful. It weakens you to be expecting pain, to know that it must come before the day is over. And I haven't slept at all, not for a very long time."

"Not slept?"

"No, not at all. It's hard to live like that, you know, night after night and never sleeping. It makes your life seem long, it makes me feel like an old man. It's curious to think back and remember, to see the days stretched out with no break in between. It's months now since I slept. You open your eyes in the morning and you begin to trace your thoughts, you can trace right back to what you were thinking when you went to bed. Sometimes the thoughts are queer, there's a dull,

mysterious period, it comes I think a little after midnight, when your thoughts go up and down like a drowsy tune. But you can see them in the morning, you can see the way they're linked together. And looking back it seems like one long day, like an endless avenue where you cross the shadows of the trees and never feel their shade. It makes you tired, living like that, being so different from other people. But I wanted to go on living, God let me live. And now——"

The train had started moving, the houses in the boulevard slid past, the granite face of a cutting rose to hide the view. He went and let down the window as far as it would go, turned and looked back to where the train had started.

"Was there no one on the platform," he asked, "to see us off? You didn't see anybody waving? I have a friend who might have come to see me off."

"I saw no one."

"Where are we going?"

"To Eshpen. But you were telling me——"

"I can't remember what I was saying."

"About your illness. You said——"

"Ah, that is over now. I——"

"You are able now to sleep again?"

"To sleep? No, I have given up trying. But God has given me a restfulness, I like to sit and watch things. Something happened which I can't remember . . ."

"To sit and watch, yes, that is a part of life, a part too frequently neglected. To watch and pray; but it isn't everything, we can't just watch, human misery won't allow us to sit idle. So dull, besides." He marked a place on the bottle with his finger, took out the cork, and drank the wine down just so far. He handed across the bottle, wiped his lips with a sweep of his flowing

sleeve. He stared with lighting eyes at the multilingual warning on the wall before him, his lips began to move as if he prayed, as if the notice were a message sent to stir him. "We must be crucified," he said, "and suffer patiently. The weakness of the body, the misery we see around us, all that is given us to suffer, that in suffering we come nearer purity. But that is not sufficient. If our suffering were deep and sinless, if we felt as Christ did when He suffered, I think it would be enough. But we are not like Him, our very suffering we use to take a pride in. And did He not heal before He suffered?"

"If I could sleep, if I could sleep for one night only I should be ready to begin again. But now . . ."

"You are young," the friar said, "you have a life before you. Oh yes, I can see, I'm used to people's faces, I know it's only illness that makes you look like a man who's past his prime. And I'm an old man, and yet I've something in me. You who are young——"

"I'm tired," he answered, "I want to rest and watch the things which pass. I don't want to remember . . ."

"It was like that in Gethsemane. He suffered while they slept."

"But I can't sleep at all. That's what I told you, that's why my strength has gone. You cannot struggle if you haven't strength from sleeping."

"He will provide you strength."

Before midday the rocky land of Eastern Przinopel, the staring cliffs and bramble-covered rises, had vanished far behind. Having stopped for half an hour at Leidel-Uun the train ran forward at a higher speed across the Hansal plain, and the motion of the carriage, which had changed with the varying gradients, resolved itself to a hard monotony. The friar took out his manual and tried again to read. In the middle hours of morning they

had talked together sleepily, discussing the *Tractatus* with a hesitant forbearance; and now, having sucked the oranges the friar had bought at Leidel, they fell again agreeably into silence.

In the regularity of the coach's motion the inward quietness he had felt upon the lake returned; but not the happiness. It came to his awareness, as he watched the drowsy fields go by, the alternate brown and yellow, the lonely farms which drifted past, the distant flow of hills, that this was another journey different from the last one, that the light he had seen ahead, subdued and flickering, had disappeared behind. The petty agonies of journeying, the strain upon his eyes, the jolting hardness against shoulder-blades and buttocks, the weight of unsupported head on the muscles of his neck, had become a pain for which his mind could yield no analgesic. It had been easier to travel than to rest, his spirit had travelled forward and he had not minded how the carriage shook his body so long as it bore him where his spirit led. Now, he had passed his stopping-place, the journey held no purpose. 'At Valstik,' he repeated, 'there are hills and trees, I shall hear the goat bells there, I shall smell the hay.' But he thought of the country bare and gaunt in winter, of the leafless trees in skeleton against a shroud of snow. 'And yet I can go no farther, had I the strength to travel I would still be lacking in the will to go.' He did not know how his object had escaped him, only that now he had turned into retreat. He sat to face the engine, the country as he saw it through the dirty window-pane was hardly different from what he had seen through the hours from Warsaw on. The corporal feeling was the same, as if his journeying had been unbroken, he fancied still when he closed his eyes that Paillard sat beside him. But then, as if waking to

a pain which sleep had darkened, he knew that the train was bearing him away from his desire. It would be finished soon, God would release him. But now, as his mind drew back, as he felt his spirit fastened to the place he had left behind, he found no solace in the thought of the journey ending. He could lose his mind, but memory was like a distant music, like the tune to which a deaf man listens, a tired melody that haunts the caverns of his brain. It had lost its form and colour, though he strove to raise its image he could never find it, its loveliness was all his mind retained. And yet it would not leave him, it would not let him lie in peace at Valstik, it would never let him go. His mind would seek oblivion, the Heaven he longed for was the hiding of his long, distorted dream. But there beyond all consciousness that memory's light would follow, in the deep and restful place God made he would catch far off, destroying his contentment, the feeble, lovely glow of the vision he had seen.

The light was going when the train drew into Eshpen; in the slanted dusty rays the concrete station looked old and tired. The area was deserted, save for a peasant family awaiting the local train, a group of men with tool bags, a railway foreman; who stared with distant curiosity at the high, lace-curtained coaches as at a vulgar miracle, unworthy of their closer scrutiny. The girl with apples in a basket moved forward half a pace, called 'Zow lseist' in a voice which the engine's noise rolled over like a flood. Nobody else came near. They passed together through the station house and along the dusty road. They paused to watch the train move on and waited till the noise had died away, grateful for liberty. 'I have escaped,' he thought, 'it has gone without me.'

It was a bare and ugly town of three roads meeting, one-storied selt-stone houses pitched where the ground was even, a wine store and a latticed cable pylon with a mass of dusty yawt-shrub growing amidst the rubbish in between. The dust which the breeze had blown all day from the sandy Poltlein uplands had settled now upon the roofs and doorsteps, on the withered grass with which the road was fringed. The air was still and dry, when they came from the shadow of the station the sun shone warm against their faces, they saw the straggled town in watered silhouette against the light-washed sky. They felt, walking side by side between the houses, like strangers from a distant country, conscious of faces watching, unsteady with the hard vibration they had endured all day. They were silent, their footsteps hardly sounded on the sandy road, the only noise they heard was the clink of hammers from a forge beside the square. The odour of the town was unfamiliar, already the hours of their journey were dimmed in recollection like a country seen by its coastline from a ship headed out to sea.

"I shall stop near here," the friar said. "I shall spend the night at the Abbey of St. Joseph, it's only a mile away. Will you come with me and rest there, just for the night? They would gladly give you lodging."

But for him, while the last of daylight showed and in such a place as this, the day's march was not over. Valstik he knew, he had spent an Easter season there, how long ago he could not remember. "I thank you," he said, "but I must go to Valstik." He saw it dimly, a line of cottages beside a moor, the hills that rose to larch woods, a steep and winding cart-track which led from the wooden church past Eilsott's holding to the hidden plateau where Eilsott's cattle grazed. Eilsott

would be dead by now, would not remember him if indeed he lived; but the smell would return to him, till winter came he could sit high up among the trees, he would find a room which overlooked the valley and bathe his tiredness, in the earliest light, with the gentle-featured Ruisdael pasture-land which stretched to vision's end. "It is kind of you," he said, "but I'd rather go on. I don't understand this country, Valstik's the place I know." The friar, anxiously murmuring 'Christus tecum,' watched him from the corner till he was out of sight.

For a mile or more the road went straight against the sun. Then it turned obliquely southward, dipped, crossed the Ransel by a two-piered selt-stone bridge, ran by the river's side for half a mile and vaulted sharply to its former height. The sun was upon his left side now, to his right the ragged moor of rock and hypnum peat showed a tender beauty in its candle-lighted shades of grey and brown. Its colour changed as every minute passed, the farther reaches darkened, the shrubs and boulders as they lost their separate shades resigned their conformation, came to movement, lowered a crooked horn and crouched like prairie cattle in the shades and hollows of the broken ground. A little breeze, so light he hardly felt it, ran like a plague of flies across the country's surface, making a whisper from the tufts of fern, from the brittle sand which it swept on the stone-laid road; in such a quietness eerie, animate, night's spirit creeping to reclaim its hour. As the sky's mauve dulled, the place he walked in lost its strangeness, its unaccustomed scents gave place to the smell of night; the world within himself of reaching darkness, the hours he knew by their agony of tedium, by the waking life of objects stilled in daytime, by the closing pressure of the

nearest things, encircled him again. He walked more swiftly, with the confidence of animals at night-time. His limbs felt younger, his stiffness had worked out and the blisters on his feet were a pain too slight to hold him back. The road showed whitish-grey a quarter mile, he did not know where it ultimately led; the narrow space his eyes held travelled with him, it was large enough for the reach of his tired mind. He was aware no more of the effort cost by walking, the pain was no sharper than to travel in a train. His eyelids fell. When he opened them the margin of his scene had come no closer, the utter darkness drew away before him, all but his eyes' reach slept. Could I once pass, he thought, into that fringe of blackness, I had reached the long day's end.

¶ The road sank drifting downwards. The forest gathered, closed, the beeches stretched their arms to make a ceiling, so that the stars' light hardly showed.

¶ Something had not happened. There had been no pain. He had become accustomed to the day's division into separate parts, before and after the tortured hour which came each afternoon: the dread, the ghastly certainty, the evening aftermath of slow relief. And to-day it had not happened.

He sought the reason, thinking slowly back through the day's long course. He came to the place where memory was blotted, where a man's face showed for an instant before blackness intervened. His fist had touched, but surely only lightly; the man, he thought, had laughed or screamed. He remembered how on the lake the shore seemed close, how his mind had followed hard on his eyes' direction, how his body seemed untenanted the while his spirit lifted, flew, upon

the early sunshine. He was closer to that hour than he had been all day, the journey in the train seemed like an intermission kin to dreaming. Someone had lain upon the floor, back there where the space in recollection showed like an ugly chasm; someone, he knew it now, who was lying dead. His thoughts flew wide again and returned once more to the moment which perplexed him. He sweated with the effort to remember, to concentrate his recollection on that single point. The man had held a letter, Andrew had threatened him. That much was open now. His hand had been raised in anger; he could feel, as one feels in later life a misery of childhood, the hatred rising suddenly, ebulliently, within. Either the face he had struck at and the body lying were the same; or else . . .

He raised a hand before his face and saw a fingered shape, pale grey, grotesquely undefined. A dead man's hand, he knew, would look like that. He put the hand against his face and felt the fingers warm. But he was not satisfied.

God, who was Love, could love all things but hatred. The hell that since early manhood he had pictured, at times so fervently that the vision came distinct and clear, was not a place of wrath and fire; rather, a lonely consciousness, infinite desolation, a waking horror of the past remembered, of hatred unredeemed, of changeless fear. . . . His body moved, but in the forest's shelter it could throw no shadow. He felt a tiredness in his limbs, a slow, insistent pain where a cramping boot would rub at every step against a blistered toe. But only faintly; as a doctor feels a patient's pain, as he suffers from a limb that twists before him; not his own pain but another's. His body moved, and the wall of trees moved by him, but the tunnel that he walked in

would not alter, it turned a little, rose and fell, but it led to no escape.

He stopped, and in the silence heard a noise like the fall of rain. Somewhere a twig cracked, there were voices whispering. He heard his own voice cry, began to walk again, and broke into a run. The thoughts that shook and echoed in his mind would not be quieted. He ran still faster, but they followed in pursuit.

¶ The trees were lighted by a strange and sudden dawn, a yellow light in which he saw his shadow hardening on the surface of the road. The light rose from behind, it cast upon the higher branches half a mile ahead, swung and dropped down, increased in power till the road was flooded in the brilliance of midday. He halted, terrified, as the forest he had lost was re-created; hard white against hard shadow, deathly pattern of the cool and lovely forests he had known while yet he lived. He felt the eyes of fire like God's own eyes in judgment. He dared not look behind, he ran straight forward, screaming, up the avenue of light.

The whirlwind voice of God's high wrath subsided. The brilliance sank to twilight, only a man's voice shouted, it was a man who ran behind him, caught him, held him fast.

¶ He was seated beside the road, the man stood above him. Gradually his voice came back.

He said: "I'll go with you, you needn't hold me. I'll go with you all right."

The man said: "Andrew, I've got some news for you, listen," but he would not hear him.

"I can explain," he said. "I'll explain to you how it happened. I didn't mean to kill him, I hated him,

but I didn't mean to kill. It was like this—listen, I want to explain—he had a letter that I wanted. It wasn't meant for him. I don't know why, I can't remember, but it wasn't meant for him——" The man had got him by the arm and pulled him up. "It's all right, I'll come with you if you want me, but I just want to explain."

He saw the motor standing, made no resistance when the man caught hold of his waist and pushed him in. "Won't you let me explain?" he asked again, but the man said, "Wait, you can explain to-morrow, it doesn't matter now." The headlamps shone again, the engine started, the trees began to slide.

¶ The man who had caught him drove, there was no guard on the seat behind with him. He thought he was quite alone, and wondered that the officer so easily would trust him. If he wished, he thought, he could still make his escape.

But the bundle he had fancied to be only luggage moved. He caught the paleness of a face, a hand came out towards him.

"Andrew! I'm here."

So God in His love had granted him that pity. He could remember now a patch in earthly life he had forgotten, how her spirit walked before him in the snow. Her name returned to him, he murmured 'Greta!' he caught and felt her rough hand, warm, as if they both were living. He heard her voice again, it asked him:

"Andrew, why did you go away?"

To that he gave no answer, fearing to speak aloud lest her presence be taken from him. But cautiously, as if he held some fragile thing, he drew her body to his side. Along its path of light the car fled as if drawn

by gravitation, the engine's baritone, the hiss of tyres, washed over in the tearing stream of wind; without vibration, only rocking as a ketch rocks in a rippled bay. His forehead caught the rush of air, his ears were crowded with the high wind's roar. But close, within sensation, he felt the softness of her breast against his breast, bending to touch her with his lips he smelt her hair.

"You must stay," he said, "you will stay a little time?"

She did not answer and he felt her crying. It must give her pain, he thought, to venture where he had come. The miracle must pass, she could not stay in the lonely place where he was. He must be merciful as God showed mercy, it was time to let her go. But he saw ahead the endless road that he must travel, conscious, unsleeping, carrying the burden of his troubled thoughts. Once he had let her go she could not return, she would never find the place where God would deeply hide him. He had made but one day's journey in the life that followed life, the distance must increase till the mind of those who lived could not cross over. This was the memory he would have to feed his hunger, in the timeless exile where he watched the distance growing this was the moment he must keep to be his strength.

"Not yet," he said, "you must stay a little longer."

He wanted to forget his thoughts, all reason, to live the moment only in the warm sweet depth of his emotion. But he knew how vision faded, he could remember how he lost her when his mind grew tired, that night, the holy night, when she had walked with him across the snow. He turned her head so that her face looked up at him. He saw no face, only a paleness in the dark of

her dress and hair. But he touched her forehead with his fingers, feeling it cool, he touched her eyelids, felt the smoothness of her cheek. It was like reality, the flesh he touched, as if her very body had come to be with him. He forgot all caution, let his face fall down against her face, his lips against her cheek. And the love his tired spirit had grew warm like boyhood's passion, as if he lived again. A warmth ran through his blood, a slow intoxication. He felt his head encurtained by her hair, which the flowing wind wrapped round his neck, he felt her breath against his face, his body stiffened, trembling, in the fire her beauty gave. He sank exhausted but his arms still held her; all his fatigue was drowned in the warm rich fountain of his love.

The beam they followed swung, the engine's voice grew louder as the car set furiously upon its upward climb. The speed increased, the tree-trunks fled away, they reached at once the summit and the open plain. The beam that spread a lake of light in the wider darkness, narrowed in the channel of a street. He saw for a moment only the curving line of peasant houses, a church's door, a sandstone cottage where the jutting wall was scooped to hold a shrine. But it came, that moment's vision, with an odd familiarity, as if he read from a book he had once written, as if he dreamt again a long-forgotten dream. If his body slept in death his memory would not slumber, the days when he had lived and felt the sun would return upon a lighted screen so lively painted that he seemed to pass them through again. If he had held her then, if in reality her body had been close to him. . . .

"I have been to that place," he whispered, "do you know its name?" Her mouth was pressed against his

coat, he did not hear the answer that she gave. But how could she answer when the world was not her world, when she came a stranger to the dark infinity which held him? "You must go back," he said, "it's dangerous for you to stay here." But her arms about him tightened, she was crying as if she could not bear to go.

He heard her voice at last, she asked him: "Why did you run away? Why did you go away like that, surely it wasn't you who killed him?"

He said with gentleness, "I didn't kill him, but in God's eyes hatred is like murder. I didn't hate him till he took my letter . . ."

She said "I read your letter . . ."

"It's dangerous," he repeated, "for you to stay here."

But he felt her warmth against his breast, her flesh's tenderness, the incense of her hair. He knew she would not leave him. Her gentleness was like God's gentleness, as if God's pity had been wrapped in her. God who had come to suffer as men suffered could not withhold His pity from the souls He had forsaken. God could not enter in the place where he had fallen; but the tears He wept, like Eloa turned to beauty, He suffered to come near and comfort him.

His eyes had closed. The fluid, vibrant scene, the cool delirium in which his consciousness ran fleeting through the night-time, had formed about his mind's eyes once again. But he did not ask for sleep, his spirit could withstand its weariness. On wings of pity she had come to share the loneliness of his damnation. Her spirit walked with him, her love had forced death's bastion to find him suffering.

10

HERE it was autumn. The evening had been misted, the morning air was sharp and touched with frost. From the poplars in the Maulbeer Allee the leaves, half-yellowed, were already falling. The sky, still blue, was paler; but the gentler, hazeless morning light showed the Antians oddly close, almost as if they formed a monstrous ornament in the University gardens. The last of the vacation students had piled themselves, their fishing gear and mountain stocks, into a creaking cab and gone away. With five days' breathing-space before the term began the tutors drifted sunnily along the Allee, saluting one another, sniffing the air with pleasure and passing on.

The Mercedes which had roared into the town last evening stood now by the Gasthaus wall; white with dust.

From the dormer window where he had sat all night he could see the avenue to where it turned beyond the bridge; to the right the low stone wall where students sat in term time, the tawny Antian cliffs shin deep in turf, the lilacs intervening; on the other side, aslant, the sobered brick façade of the Theologische Schule, the Sionkirche's classic porch, a timbered boarding-house. The casement stood half open, from the air his nostrils felt he thought it must be winter. But the sky was clear, and between the restless shadows of the trees the avenue was bathed in sunshine. A scent, perhaps, from the gardens brought his mind to recognition; or perhaps the tender colours, the church's crusted grey that

matched the lichened wall, the belt of green, the tinted carriage way, the mellowed blur of green and stone beyond the bridge at which his eyesight failed. The quietness; where horses' hoofs were softened on the road of powdered rubble, where the carriage wheels and bicycles sent up a gentle hiss. There came to him in time, out of the tranquil fragrance, the name he sought: Rosczell.

He was alone in that small room. The door would be locked, but he had not tried it. They will come, he thought, to fetch me soon.

¶ West of the Gasthaus the Allee lost its character, narrowing by degrees, becoming hedged with cycle shops and shoddy lodging houses, a concrete beer-house, a railway coach where vegetables were sold. But to-day the shabby street was live with bunting, the flag of the Republic hung from dirty windows, a banner flapped between the highest roofs: *Willkommen!* The weight of ornament increased towards the station yard, where a chain of paper flowers drooped evenly between the lamp-posts wreathed in bunting, where the bandstand, flower-bedecked, rose to a galaxy of silken banners. By ten the yard was crowded, and still the people came in twos and threes, in family groups, in strings of boys and girls, along the station road. The platform had been corded off, and there the Bürgermeister walked, silk hatted, in his morning coat and white chrysanthemum, beside the Rektor. The stationmaster followed close behind in company with Pastor Anselt, and like a comet's tail a group of dignitaries followed. Within the station house the café tables had been pushed together to make room for a little stage. The doorway on the outer side was all but closed with tables, the

tables spread along the outer terrace and across the yard below. And already none was vacant. They sat in families. They sipped their beer at intervals, they smiled at one another, they nodded gently to the music of the band. Excitement grew. Already the younger people pressed against the railing were cheering something, the stationmaster glanced repeatedly at his watch, a rumour spread that the train had been delayed. But the older people were content with waiting. No less excited than the rest, they enjoyed the prolongation of excitement, it was pleasant to sit waiting in the temperate sun.

For the moment everyone was served but the trio in the corner. Olstein with his third eye saw them. He slid his sixteen stone between the crowded tables, smiled at the quarry between his huge moustaches and his many chins. "Indeed, yes, it is the best in all Bavaria. From Munich, yes. Three? Two only? Two beers! Danke schön!" He whisked his napkin, slid the tray beneath his arm, turned back again. "You will not know, perhaps, why there are so many people here, all this festivity. You are strangers here, English, yes? I will tell you, if you please—you understand my German? It is a professor of ours, a great man of this town, a very noble man, who was gone into Russia. Ah, you have been told already? A hundred thousand pardons, you must forgive me. But excuse, your friend here, he is sick? Verzeihen Sie? Ah, he is only fatigued. I thought perhaps the air—it is hot in here. Outside it is cooler. Two beers, sehr gut!"

"You must remember," Hans Bülger said again, "we shall see him very much changed. You can't go through an experience like that . . ." But his wife had ceased to listen. "Those people over there," she said, "in the corner—you can see if you move your chair a

little——" "But who, meine herzgeliebte, someone we know?" "Keep still, when you move your head I can't see them." She rose at last, smoothed out her dress and made her way to the other table. A chair was empty and she boldly took it.

"Bitte schön, I should not perhaps have interrupted, but I thought I might do something to help you. You speak German?"

"A little——"

"Your friend here, he is not very well? I thought perhaps I could send someone for some medicine. Or, wait, I have a tablet here. No? But it is quite safe, merely an aspirin compound. But wait, that gentleman over there, he is a doctor. I can get him if you like. No? You are waiting for a train, perhaps—you have far to go?"

"No, no, we are staying in the town. We only came here because we heard——"

"Zwei Biere! Eine Mark, bitte. Danke schön, besten Dank!"

The waiter flicked the change on to his tray, caught up an empty mug as he revolved. Frau Bülger began again:

"You have had a long journey? Your friend looks so tired, I was sorry when I saw him——"

Far off an engine whistled, the children in the station yard screamed in reply. Everyone rose, pushing aside the chairs, those who were nearest crowded towards the platform door, children were caught in arms, young women scrambled on the tables. "Herren und Damen, will you please resume your seats, you will see him perfectly if you sit still." But Olstein's voice was lost in the rising murmur. 'It's coming, listen, that's the whistle, here it is.' They heard the engine now, its

noise growing louder till a burst of cheering drowned it. Someone yelled: "Look, there, in the second coach, that's him." And all at once, dimming the storm with tempest, the band in the station yard broke loose into the *Kriegesmarsch der Priester*. The cord which barred the doorway burst, the crowd squeezed through and thronged the platform. As fast as it was emptied the station house was filled again with people. They mounted three together on the tables, climbed on each other's shoulders, wildly cheering, laughing like children, weeping, embracing their wives. 'Here, I can see him, there, talking to the Rektor!' 'Rudolf, get down, help me up, here, let me see!' The door to the yard was blocked, behind the crowd was frantically shouting while the band strove for the mastery. 'Look! There! Keep back, make way there, back! Look, here he comes!'

The knot in the platform doorway tightened, the stationmaster's hat appeared. 'Keep back there, let them through!' Outside the cheers continued, within they sank to a rapturous murmur. *Willkommen! Gott sei mit Dir! Willkommen.* . . . The crowd was edging back, pushing the tables behind them, that was the Bürgermeister's hat appearing now. *Willkommen! Willkommen.* There was the Rektor now, climbing on to the stage, and there the Herr Doktor himself. From the crowded doorway came another cheer which was taken up inside. The Rektor bowed. The Bürgermeister called for silence. Olstein, seizing the first chance offered, began to circulate another round of beer.

"Silence please, Herren und Damen, silence, if you please." That was the Rektor. "Will someone kindly stop that band, just for a few minutes. Thank you,

thank you." The noise inside became a scrape of chairs and tables, a sound of beer mugs clinking, of a girl who quietly wept. "Herren und Damen. To-day is a great occasion. We have gathered here to welcome a friend—and a hero."

The applause broke out again, tutors and tradesmen slapped each other and their wives upon the shoulders. "You must understand," Frau Bülger said to Andrew, "that the Herr Doktor whom you see there has returned from a magnificent expedition. It was a feat of heroism such——"

"Some of us can remember how we said good-bye to our friend with admiration mingled with misgivings. We knew that the Will of God must be accomplished, and yet perhaps, we lacked the faith to trust Him. We knew our dear friend's wisdom. We doubted, some of us, if his physical strength would be sufficient for his noble mission. He has proved us wrong. . . ."

For the first time Andrew spoke. He asked in a whisper: "That man—is that the judge?"

Matt shook his head. "Look at that other fellow, the one who's sitting down, the little round chap. D'you recognize him?"

"That," Frau Bülger interposed, following his glance, "that is the Herr Doktor."

"Do you?" Matt insisted.

"No, no one like that. I remember now, there were three men in the room besides myself and him. The innkeeper was one. . . ."

But he stared again at the man to whom Matt had pointed. He saw him distantly, the light was bad, everything was yellow. Yes, there was something he remembered in that face, something familiar.

". . . I need not dwell upon those months when we

waited for the news which never came; or upon that sorrowful day when lying rumour . . ."

He remembered now of whom the face reminded him. Franz. Franz Grundmann. It was like Franz Grundmann grown to be very old. Franz. He thought again, but the door that had closed upon his memory would barely yield to the weight he thrust against it. Franz. He could see for an instant, darkly, Franz in his college room, seated beside the window, smoking. Franz talking in his eager, serious voice, of something he had planned. . . . His strength of mind was not enough, the door had closed again. He could only repeat the name: Franz, Franz Grundmann.

Frau Bülger heard him. She asked:

"You know him then? You are acquainted with Herr Doktor Grundmann?"

"By repute," Matt told her. "We read the account in the *Tageblatt*—a few days ago——"

". . . tired, and we must not try his strength too much. But he has promised to give us a little of the story for which we have waited so eagerly, and I am going to ask him to do so now. Herren und Damen, Doktor Grundmann."

While the applause continued Franz remained seated, smiling, bemused. He took off his spectacles, peered hard to see the faces at the nearest tables, nodded in doubtful recognition. Never in all his life—such warmth, such friendliness, so many people, such excitement.

Under cover of the tumult Greta leaned across and whispered: "Matt, don't you think we'd better get him out? He looks so tired, it's hurting him, all this."

"No," Matt said firmly, "wait a bit."

"After it is over," Frau Bülger told her, "I will give you the whole story. Naturally you are curious——"

The Bürgermeister stood with arms uplifted, beseeching silence. The noise died to a curious stillness, like the dreadful moment of an execution. The mugs were on the tables now, nobody stirred, a hundred pairs of eyes were fixed upon Franz Grundmann as he got up, trembling slightly, and held the back of the chair for his support.

"It is very kind of you to give me such a welcome . . ."

How weak his voice had grown. The same voice, gentle, rounded, perfect in its southern accent, but oh, how quiet, how small.

". . . not deserve the praise which our honoured Rektor has given me. For first, my expedition was no such hardy undertaking as he pretends, and secondly, it must be judged a failure. Not, perhaps, in God's eyes, for God will judge us by our intentions, He glorifies our failures. But humanly, I have done so little, and there was so much to be done. . . ."

"Matt! Matt, tell me something."

"Ruhe! Ruhe!"

It was one of the foreigners at the back who had interrupted, the one with the beard who looked so ill. He was insane, perhaps, why had they brought him here?

". . . but to me it has been a wonderful revelation of God's love and power. It is a country which has shut the door against God's love, and yet I felt His power there, His closeness, more than I had ever felt it before. . . ."

That voice, it was so like Franz's. If only he could remember . . . but Franz, he thought, was dead.

Someone had told him about Franz dying; and yet, as he listened to the man, the man like Franz, who was speaking from the platform, he seemed to hear Franz's voice. And from far away an echo came to match it, 'I tell you, Antrew my friendt, God has oder chiltren". . .'

He was tired, so tired.

". . . tell you a story which will show you how God cares for us when we have most need of Him. I was on a journey westwards from a place called Sos, a little place, you will hardly find it on the map. I had with me only my guide and one bearer, we were on a route which is very little used. We came into a snowstorm, such a storm as I had never seen. It held us up for two whole days, and it left us exhausted. Our supplies were small, I doubted whether we should get through. It was worse the next day, my guide was lame, our food had given out altogether. I thought then that my work was finished, that God did not will me ever to see my home and friends again. I prayed that He would give me strength if He thought it good, but I doubted—yes, I doubted then—if God the fountain of all life had the power to save mine. And then, what happened? Something you will not readily believe—God wrought a miracle! I said, to encourage my men, that we might meet some trader if we went a little farther. We started to go on, very slowly, and my foot struck on something buried underneath the snow. It was a little sledge, with bundles tied on it. I opened one of them, and the first thing I found was a tin of oatmeal . . ."

"*Ruhe! Ruhe!*"

The foreigners again! Why must they chatter in the middle of a speech so solemn, so awe-inspiring?

It was Matt who had spoken.

"D'you remember, Andrew, what a hell of a job we had with that knot. I'd forgotten till this moment. Don't you remember?"

But Andrew gave him no answer. His head had sunk on Greta's shoulder, his face turned up. His eyes were closed, a little colour had come into his cheeks. His mouth was parted slightly, his breathing deep and even. He was fast asleep.

Norwich
October, 1933
October, 1934

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